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Rodale's

The Magazine Divers Trust

AUGUST 1996 (DISPLAY UNTIL AUGUST 29)

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- ▶ Defog Your Mask
- ▶ Speed Your Descents

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Operators, Resorts,
Live-aboards

Underwater Photography For Beginners

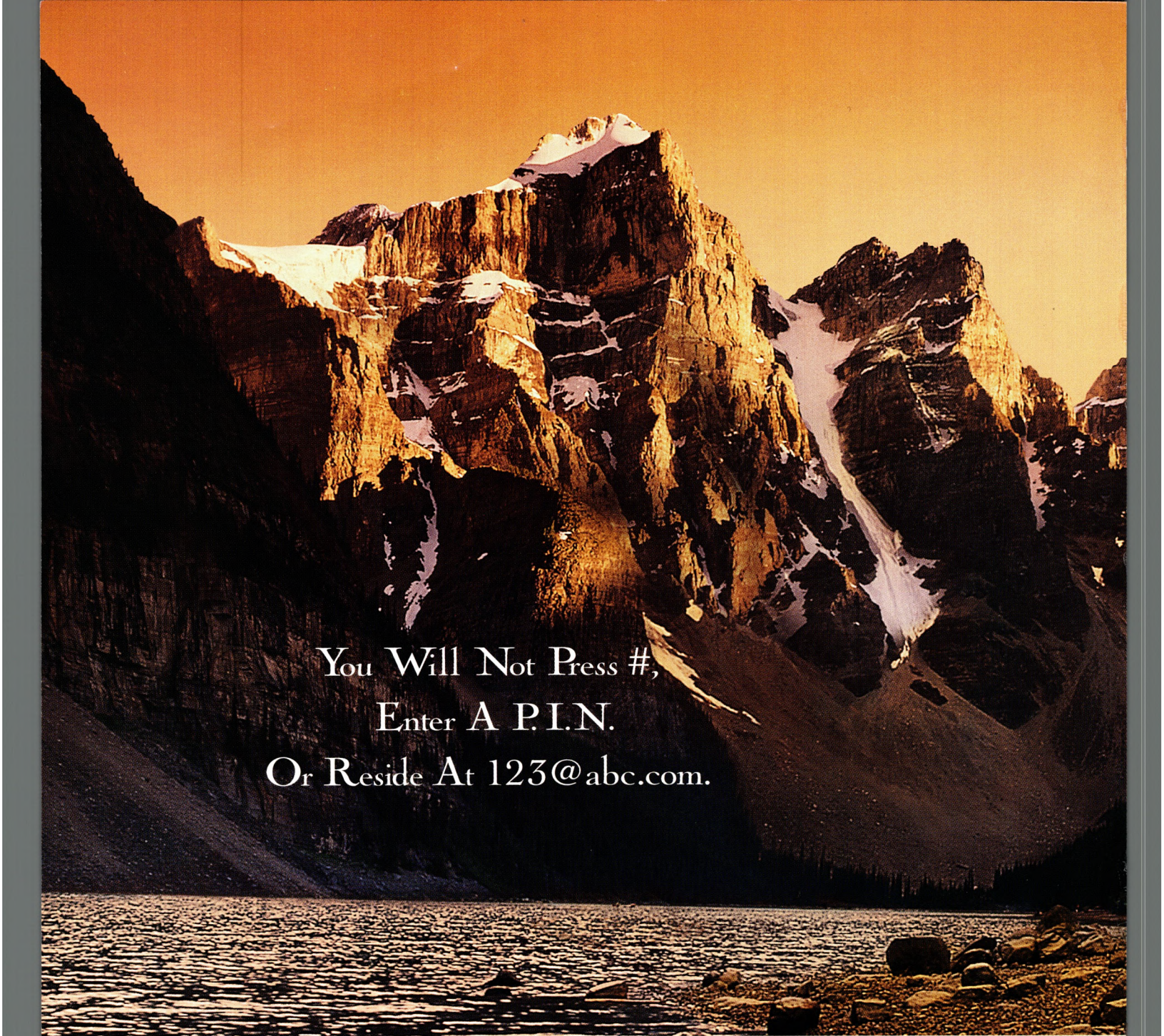
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SCUBA DIVING

The Magazine Divers Trust

Volume 5, number 7, issue 39

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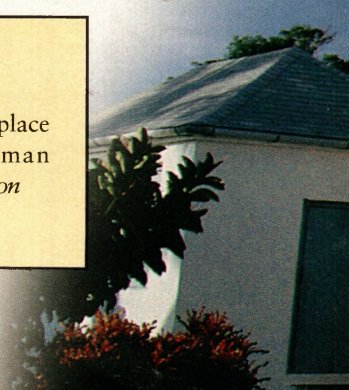
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Cover: Photography by M. Timothy O'Keefe. Shot at Devil's Den, Williston, Fla.

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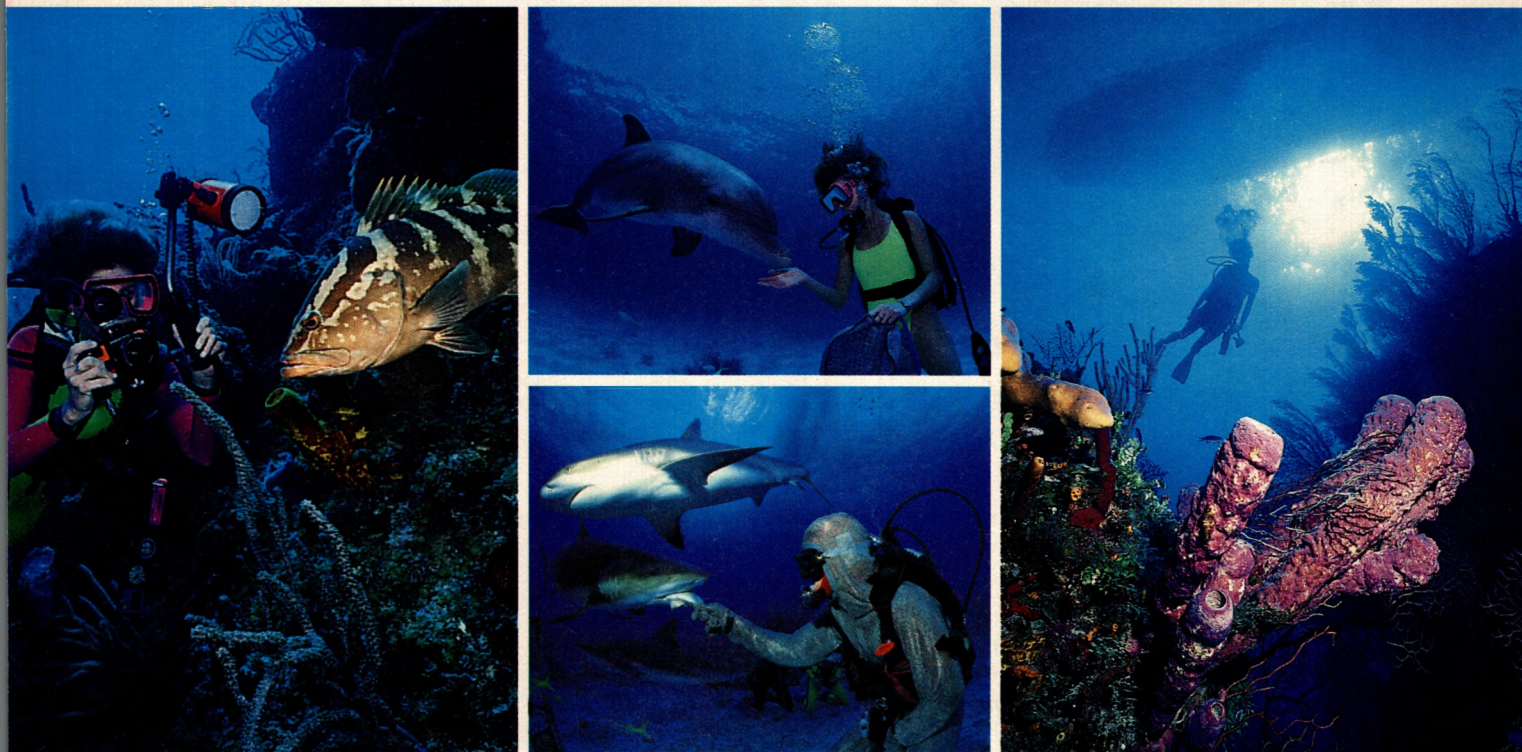


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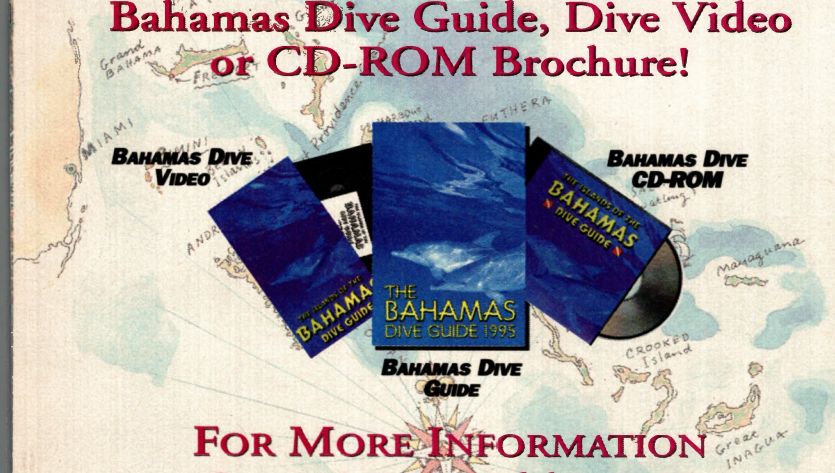


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BEHIND THE LINES

The Galapagos Crucible

By David Taylor



What will ultimately govern the Galapagos? The forces of greed or the forces of nature?

When field editor Bucky McMahon returned after two weeks on assignment in the Galapagos, he phoned to say he had made it back in good shape. "How was the diving?" I asked.

"Well ..." A pause, typical of this quiet man's slow, thoughtful speech. "I guess they were the greatest dives of my life." Another pause. "Magical, really."

Understand this—Bucky never exaggerates. I knew his statement was fact, not hype.

"What about the illegal fishing?" I asked—the focus of his story.

This time there was no pause, no hesitation. "It's bad," he said. "Much worse than we thought."

You can read the disturbing details of his investigative report "Galapagone?" in this issue. What Bucky found, besides the fact that the chilly, nutrient-rich, current-swept waters of this 19-island archipelago still offer one of diving's ultimate experiences, is that the Galapagos are under siege—this time on a lethal scale in sync with human technological evolution. In addition to about 1,000 Galapaguinos fishing illegally, the industrial fishing boats—drift netters, long-liners, shark and tuna boats—have arrived and are beginning their devastation of this World Heritage Site. The conclusion of conservationists: Unless something is done to stop the plunder now, the Galapagos' marine environment could be decimated.

How could this happen?

It's all in the numbers. Currently, the world fish catch is estimated at 85 million tons annually. Yet the maximum

sustainable harvest, according to the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Association, is 53 million tons. No wonder that the majority of the world's 17 major fishing areas are in serious decline. No wonder that in order to satisfy the human demand for fish, estimated at 22 pounds per person annually, today's industrial fleets are forced to raid previously unexploited marine reserves like the Galapagos—in this case with the collusion of Ecuadorian government officials, whose coastal fisheries have already collapsed.

But there's a second, more insidious reason, summed up in a pointed question asked by Jack Grove, former Galapagos dive guide and now president of Conservation Network International: What if the Galapagos' famous tortoises or red-footed boobies, rather than sharks and grouper, were being killed and slaughtered for their meat? The answer, of course, would be on the six o'clock news: outrage at such a visible violation of the terrestrial world's sanctity.

Unfortunately, the ocean's life—and its destruction—remain hidden beneath the waves for all but a few: us divers. That's why it is incumbent upon divers to be the ambassadors of the oceans. We are the privileged few who have visited the underwater world, who know the magic Bucky spoke of.

For the young Charles Darwin, the Galapagos were a crucible, a concentration of the forces of evolution. That was 150 years ago. Today, these islands have again become a crucible in which humanity is forced to come to terms with its destiny, this time as we struggle to answer a question basic to our species' survival: What will we allow to govern the Galapagos and ultimately the earth itself? The forces of greed or the forces of nature?

Because ecotourism and sport diving are two keys to the preservation of the Galapagos, you hold the answer in your hands: one on your regulator, one on your wallet.

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LETTERS

Shark Cartilage

I wanted to comment on your article "Wanted: Dead, Not Alive" in your June '96 issue. I have always liked the way your magazine has addressed environmental issues, but I especially like to see that you take the issues one step further. I think that more people should be made aware of what happens to fragile species like sharks, and the many ways that they are exploited. I hope that *RSD* will be able to uncover any more research that is done on shark cartilage pills.

MICHAEL PIERNO
OLD SAYBROOK, CONN.

Regarding shark cartilage, the comment of Dr. Carl Luer that the key ingredient in the shark cartilage "is common in any animal cartilage," is quite to the point. In fact, this substance is more concentrated and better absorbed when it comes from an ordinary cow. Cows are far from endangered. Cows are a "renewable resource." So get the word

out and let's spare the sharks.

DR. MARK BURCAW
SANTA ANA, CALIF.

Tongue-Tied

For those of us who aspire to become world travelers and are generally illiterate when it comes to far-off names and places, it would sure help if you could add the proper pronunciation of place-names in your articles. I've heard several choices for Palau, Sipadan and others. It might save many of us some future embarrassment should we win the lottery.

KEITH HENDERSON
BERTHOUD, COLO.

Editor's note: puh-LAU, sih-PAH-dun, CAY-muhn, ba-HA-mahs, BONN-air and ko-sue-MEL. So Keith, is it BERTHud or ber-THOWD, Colorado?

Ad-Lib

I have notified your subscription department to cancel my subscription immediately because of the ad for The Ocean Corporation. I was amazed to see such a patently distasteful ad in *RSD*, a magazine that I thought had some awareness of changing public sensibilities. Do you really think the sport of scuba diving still

appeals purely to the sort of very young man who would be motivated by this type of egregious sexual exploitation?

I am filing a complaint, including a copy of the ad, with postal authorities for transmission of possibly pornographic material through the mail. I have also contacted the advertiser to register my outrage with them. I also plan to share my feelings with some of the internet scuba newsgroups in which I participate. There must be other female subscribers out there who may have missed this issue and the ad in question.

NANCY BRUCKNER
HATTIESBURG, MISS.



THE OCEAN CORP. AD APPEARED IN TWO REGIONAL SECTIONS OF *RSD*.

Aqua-Cops

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divers who were diving on the wreck of the ValuJet plane in Florida? They deserve praise and recognition.

MELISSA KEYES
ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Editor's note: Coincidentally, the ValuJet crash occurred just after we went to press with our July issue, which featured a profile of the Metro-Dade Underwater Recovery Unit ("Aqua Cops"), the divers who handled the underwater salvage of the downed DC-9.

Fin Review

The April issue arrived at the most opportune time, because I am a new diver and looking for gear—fins included. I called a dive shop to ask if they carried the "Tester's Choice" fins, mentioning that I'd seen the review in RSD. What an explosive reaction! His opinion was that reviews like this were all a "bunch of bull-hockey," and that he didn't believe any of it—that whichever company invested the most money got the top rating. I was floored, to say the least. I was pleased with your method of testing—13 divers, men and women, ages, abilities and conditions varied; using real people, not machines. I wonder if this dive shop didn't carry either of the Tester's Choice brands

and was feeling the crunch of lost sales? Just thought you'd be interested in the impact your magazine has. Keep up the good work.

CATHERINE KRANTZ
ANNAPOLIS, MD.

Complete Diver Workout

The article in the June issue ("The Complete Diver Workout") regarding diver fitness was right on the money. When I started diving in 1990, I was overweight and out of shape. When we were on vacation, my husband had to tow me around through each dive. I simply did not have enough energy or strength to be responsible for myself. Not anymore. For the last two years, both my husband and I have been attending a 45-minute weight circuit training class everyday after work. The difference in my diving has been tremendous. I am now able to take care of myself in the water and assist if anyone else needs help. Everybody, diver or not, needs a regular fitness program.

SUZANNE OLSEN
LAKESIDE, ORE.

Bag Lady

I have a strong feeling that this note will never see the light of day in any diving magazine. But one encounter which I can

no longer hold back regards a lady on one of her first dives in Cozumel. As a lot of folks do, some of the group had tossed some hard rolls in their BC pockets for the local fish population to enjoy as we dived off Paradise Reef. Only this particular diver decided she would rather keep hers fresh in a plastic bag. As the group drifted along, we came upon a fairly large resident grouper (who must have weighed close to 160 pounds). Unfortunately, any reference to this fish will forever be in the past tense. As the woman dug for a last piece of bread, the bag escaped her grasp and was inhaled by the grouper in a millisecond.

Only complete self-control kept me from grasping her by the neck and dragging her to the surface (after a safety stop, of course) to explain to her how she had just caused the painful death of a creature that did nothing to her but bring a moment of awe to her life.

JAMES D. SEBOURN
EAST BERLIN, PA.

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SEAVIEW

What's new, what's noteworthy under water. —EDITED BY KEITH PHILLIPS

ecology vs. economy

BIG SWAMP, BIG PROBLEM

In South Florida, the environment is the economy and the economy is the environment," proclaimed Vice President Al Gore as he hand-delivered the news that the Clinton Administration was including an Everglades and Florida Bay restoration plan in its 1997 budget proposal.

The \$1.5 billion plan, which seeks to spend \$600 million over seven years to purchase farmland and expand efforts to restore the natural flow of water through the "river of grass," is the latest move in election-year politics making restoration of America's favorite swamp a

sugar farms south of Lake Okeechobee (about one-fourth of the total) into filtering marshes and freshwater reservoirs. The marshes will provide a form of waste treatment for phosphorous pollution caused by the remaining agricultural lands. Federal land purchases will complement similar state and local programs already under way.

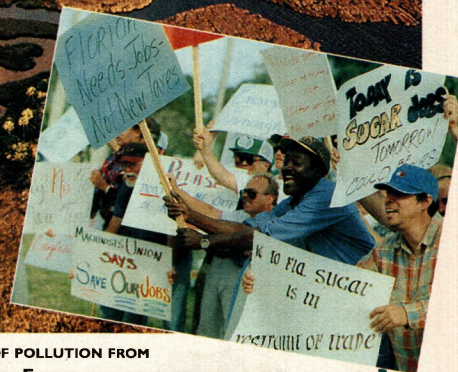
Fresh water from Lake Okeechobee flows naturally in a 100-mile-wide sheet through the Everglades down to Florida Bay. But generations of canal projects have diverted the flow to create sugar-growing farmland and provide water for South Florida's growing population. Runoff from agricultural areas has saturated large areas of the remaining Everglades watershed with excess nutrients. Salinity levels in Florida Bay have soared, killing off thousands of acres of mangroves and seagrass beds, resulting in plankton blooms and turbid water which threaten the reefs of the Florida Keys.

The Clinton plan would levy a penny a pound federal tax on Florida sugar in an

attempt to force sugar companies to shoulder part of the costs. Within Florida, Everglades interests led by Save Our Everglades are petitioning for a November ballot initiative to have a similar state tax on sugar levied for the estimated 25 years it will take to complete the restoration. "We feel there should be a principle that the polluter must pay," says Tom Sadler, communications director for the Audubon Society's Everglades Ecosystem Restoration Campaign, which backs both plans.

The sugar industry's legions of lobbyists, having successfully renewed \$1.4 billion in annual price supports under the Federal Sugar Program, are

actively fighting both measures. Robert Buker, vice president of U.S. Sugar, the state's second largest producer, claims "environmentalists are trying to put growers out of business. Our industry needs to stay healthy to continue paying our fair share of cleaning up the Everglades." That "fair share" is the \$200 million to \$300 million total they agreed to pay over 20 years as part of the Everglades Forever Act. The 1994 act was the settlement to a lawsuit initiated by the U.S. government against Florida for allowing the Everglades to become polluted. It's an agreement that Mary Barley, chair of the Save Our Everglades Committee, calls "woefully inadequate, written by the sugar industry and a step back for water quality." —BOB FRIEL



SWAMP POLITICS: REVERSING DECADES OF POLLUTION FROM AGRICULTURAL RUNOFF (TOP INSET) IN THE EVERGLADES WILL BE COSTLY, BUT ELECTION-YEAR POLITICS MAKE IT A NATIONAL PRIORITY. THE ISSUE IS NOT WITHOUT CONTROVERSY. SUGAR INDUSTRY WORKERS (BOTTOM INSET) PROTEST THE CLINTON PLAN TO TAX SUGAR FOR EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA BAY RESTORATION.

SIGN ON

To have its initiative placed on the November ballot, Save Our Everglades must get the signatures of 600,000 registered Florida voters by Aug. 7. For more information on the campaign, call (305) 373-3137, or write to: Save Our Everglades, 444 Brickell Ave., Suite 250, Miami, FL 33131.

For additional information on Everglades restoration and Florida Bay water quality, contact National Audubon Society's Everglades Ecosystem Restoration Campaign at (305) 371-6399.

top national priority. Earlier in the year, then-Senator Bob Dole worked with congressional Republicans to add \$200 million for restoration to the federal Farm Bill.

The key to Everglades restoration plans is conversion of more than 100,000 acres of

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SCOTT WISEMAN, PALM BEACH POST; STEPHEN KRAEMANN / TONY STONE

IT'LL IMPRESS THE NEIGHBORS.
THAT IS, IF THEY EVER SEE IT.



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It will certainly be tempting to drive Cherokee Classic right off the dealer's lot to some remote mountaintop not found on any map.

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On the inside, there's standard air conditioning. Driver's air bag.[†] A full floor console. Power steering. Roof rack. A rear-window wiper/washer.

Leather-wrapped tilt steering wheel. And a 190 horsepower I-6 engine. Plus, the Classic comes with your choice of two- or four-wheel drive.

If the neighbors eventually do get a glimpse of your Cherokee and if they ask you about the options, tell them there are about a million to choose from: Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Yosemite, the Rubicon Trail, etc., etc. ...

Jeep

THERE'S ONLY ONE

[†]Always wear your seat belt for a fully effective air bag. Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler Corporation.

marine biology

TAG! YOU'RE IT

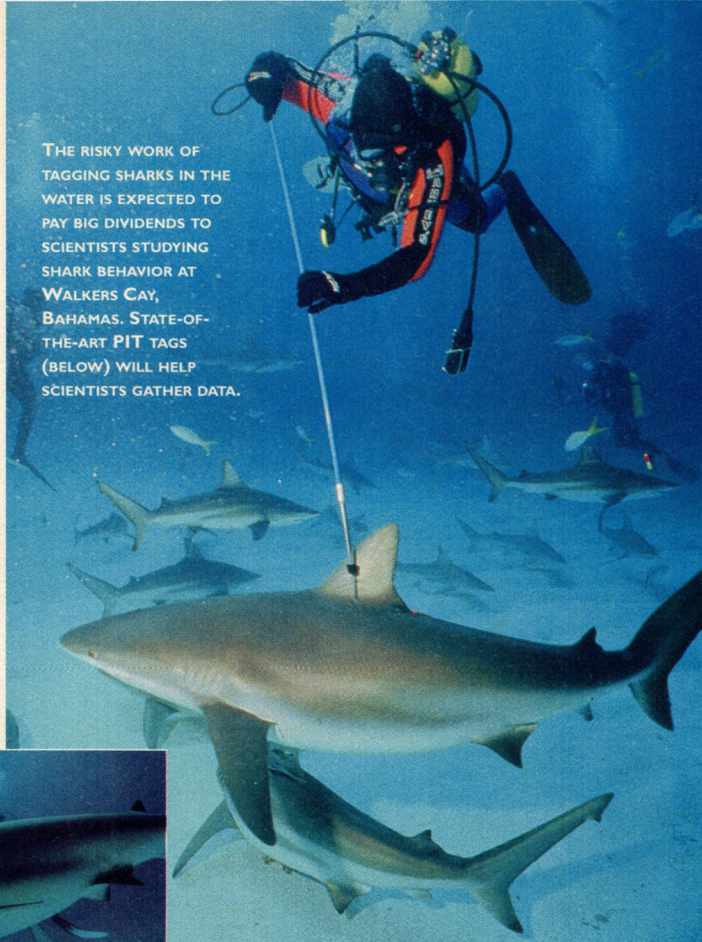
When Gary Adkison agreed to begin in-water tagging of the sharks off Walkers Cay, Bahamas, as part of a scientific research project, he wasn't sure how the sharks would react to being pricked with a needle. All the textbooks said it was a sure provocation for attack. "In their world, there's a pecking order. A small shark never attacks a big shark," says Adkison, who operates a popular shark-feeding dive that consistently draws 100 to 200 blacktip, Caribbean reef and nurse sharks.

But after the first few taggings, he discovered that the sharks' reaction was to flee rather than fight. "My only concern then was: Would they leave?" Fortunately, the answer was no. And since last fall, Adkison has tagged more than 30 sharks that return for the weekly feedings, giving scientists from the Aquarium of the Americas and the National Marine Fisheries Service an opportunity to expand their knowledge of sharks.

The scientists are working with Adkison to pioneer the use of electronic Passive Injectable Transponders (PITs) to track sharks. Similar to the tags pet owners have implanted beneath the fur of household pets, PITs are coded with an identification number that can be read like a bar code when a reading wand is

passed nearby.

Walkers Cay was selected because it attracts the largest recurring group of sharks known, giving scientists an easy-to-find population they can monitor frequently. In addition to weekly observations by Adkison, aquarium volunteers will collect data three to four times a year, keeping track of who's coming and going. "This should eliminate the need to handle a lot of sharks," said John Hewitt, senior vice president of the Audubon Institute, which operates the aquarium. "Gary is going to develop a



THE RISKY WORK OF TAGGING SHARKS IN THE WATER IS EXPECTED TO PAY BIG DIVIDENDS TO SCIENTISTS STUDYING SHARK BEHAVIOR AT WALKERS CAY, BAHAMAS. STATE-OF-THE-ART PIT TAGS (BELOW) WILL HELP SCIENTISTS GATHER DATA.



group of animals that will stay in the area. They'll present themselves on demand."

Hewitt and NMFS biologist Wes Pratt expect dramatic strides in understanding the life

cycles, reproductive habits and growth rates of sharks as a result of the project. "There's so much that's going to be uncovered," Adkison says. "We ought to have a lot of answers in five years." —CHRIS DUMMIT

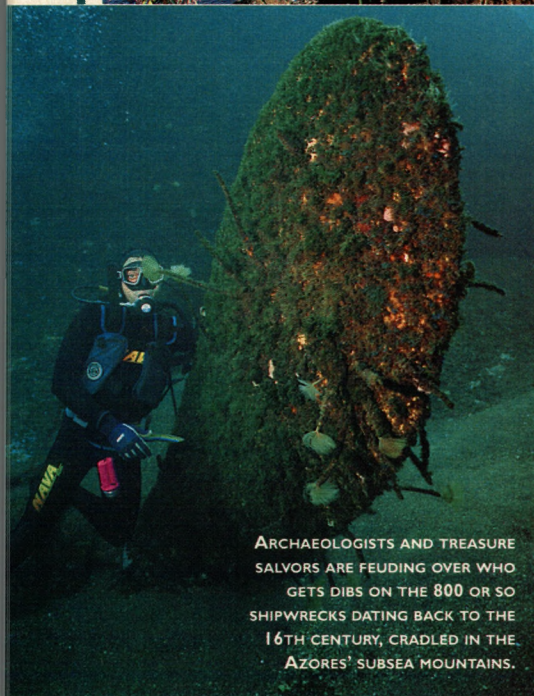


WATER COLORS

ART IMITATES LIFE

When scenic artist Julia Barraclough and 20 colleagues decided to take a working vacation in Cozumel, the result was a unique underwater art park. Assisted by Reef Ball Development Group, the troupe of artists sculpted concrete into a collection of 2,000-pound sculptures that mimic natural coral shapes. Placed in the shallows behind Club Cozumel Caribe last fall, the new snorkel site has already attracted reef fish and should soon be covered by the real thing.

DOUG PERRINE



ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND TREASURE SALVORS ARE FEUDING OVER WHO GETS DIBS ON THE 800 OR SO SHIPWRECKS DATING BACK TO THE 16TH CENTURY, CRADLED IN THE AZORES' SUBSEA MOUNTAINS.

archaeology

NAVAL BATTLE IN THE AZORES

They have plundered everything!" steams Francisco Alves, director of the National Museum of Archaeology in Lisbon, Portugal. "Archaeologists around the world agree—there is no

can boast the cultural richness found beneath the waters of this archipelago, located 1,200 miles west of Lisbon. Since Columbus, transatlantic voyagers have relied on the Azores for resupply. Over the generations, hurricanes and pirates ravaged hundreds of ships—mostly Spanish and Portuguese galleons—sinking them off the archipelago's rocky shoreline in deep subsea canyons that plunge more than a mile deep. Experts estimate that 800 ships from the 16th to 18th centuries went down in the area, many loaded with gold and precious stones.

Deep water made the wrecks unreachable, but with advances in deep-water diving and robotics, only one dilemma now remains—who gets

room for the point of view of treasure hunters."

Tough words. But for Alves, they are a necessary salvo in the war between archaeologists and treasure hunters over what is possibly the world's greatest maritime graveyard—the deep water off Portugal's Azores islands.

dibs? In 1993, influenced by American treasure hunter Robert Marx of Phoenician Exploration, Portugal passed legislation that would have opened the Azores to commercial salvors and given the government the right to buy artifacts deemed important.

The law infuriated academics like Alves. "It created for the first time a conception of archaeology different from what takes place on land," Alves says. "We are not going to legally sell artifacts from Egyptian tombs. Why should we do that in the sea?"

Marx insists that academics lack the experience and funds to stage the highly technical expeditions required in the Azores. "There's no money anyplace in the world for underwater archaeology, not even in the States," says Marx. "And this is like putting a man on the moon."

But last fall, just when Marx had his permit and his crews ready, Portuguese voters rained on his parade. They voted in a new administration that put access to Azorean wrecks on hold. While Alves feels confident the new government will restrict access to treasure hunters, Marx is taking his case to the seat of the European Union in Brussels this summer to legally challenge the Portuguese stall.

—PAUL KVINTA

READER POLL RESULTS

We've been going over the results of our panic reader poll and frankly, you guys are b-o-r-i-n-g.

In our May issue, we asked if you had ever panicked under water and if so, to tell us about it. We were prompted by the University of Wisconsin study that said more than half of all divers had panicked or experienced near panic under water. The results of our poll were similar: 65 percent of you reported some kind of a panic episode, while 35 percent reported no panic. But what spoke volumes were your stories that explained the panic situations. They almost always ended with you following the textbook response to stress: stop, breathe, think, and take action to cor-

Have you ever panicked under water?
Yes-65 percent
No-35 percent

rect the problem. Whether it was becoming jammed in a too-small coral tunnel, experiencing vertigo in zero vis, or having grisly flashbacks of a drowning victim you helped recover, you ultimately did the right thing.

August's Question: It takes about 30 seconds per dive, can make you a better diver, and preserve those priceless memories during long, cold, dry winters. Keeping an up-to-date logbook has its advantages, but only if we

Do you regularly log your dives?

Dial (800) DIVE-LINE and follow the recorded instructions to vote. Or send e-mail to RSD-mgzn@aol.com. Please indicate you are responding to the dive log reader poll. You can also register your opinion at our web site: <http://www.scubadiving.com/>.

are disciplined enough to put pencil to sometimes soggy paper, or download info from our dive computer.

Do you regularly keep some kind of diving log? If so, in what form and how detailed? And how do you use your logbook later on?

Tell us all about it in this month's reader poll by calling our toll-free Reader Comment Line, sending us e-mail or using the Talk Back section of our web site. The results will be published in a future issue of RSD.

BULLETINS

► Aug. 3

FRESHWATER UNDERWATER NATURALIST WORKSHOP taught by Keith Pamper of the Shedd Aquarium at Pearl Lake in South Beloit, Ill. For more information, call Greg Kent at (815) 389-1479.

► Aug. 10, 17; Sept. 14, 20

CASINO POINT MARINE PARK SCUBA TRAIL on Catalina Island, Calif. Divers can guide themselves along a unique underwater trail that uses temporary markers to identify marine life from anemones to zebra gobies. For more information, contact the Catalina Island Conservancy at (310) 348-4750 or e-mail: catilcon@aol.com.

► Aug. 10

DIVE FOR BOSTON HARBOR, a volunteer cleanup dive sponsored by the New England Aquarium Dive Club at M Street Beach. For more information, call Valerie Pajak at (617) 973-0240.

► Aug. 21-22

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP hosted by Gary Chestnut and Greg Kent at Pearl Lake in South Beloit, Ill. For more information, contact Greg Kent at (815) 389-1479.

► Aug. 24-25

1996 INLAND/COASTAL COMMERCIAL DIVING CONFERENCE, sponsored by the Association of Diving Contractors, will be held on the campus of Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh, Pa. For more information, contact Richard Jager at (203) 368-4611.

If there's an event you would like included in Bulletins, send all relevant information at least three months in advance to: Bulletins, Rodale's Scuba Diving, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405. Or e-mail us: RSDmgzn@aol.com.



NATURALIST AND PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS AT PEARL LAKE.



ONCE CONSIDERED A NUISANCE, MAINE SEA URCHINS ARE NOW IN DEMAND. THEIR EGGS FETCH A HIGH PRICE IN ASIAN MARKETS AND STATE OFFICIALS SAY THE PRICKLY ECHINODERMS ARE IN DANGER OF BEING OVERHARVESTED.

marine harvest

URCHIN BOOM GONE BUST?

When fortune seekers began pouring into Maine in 1990 to harvest sea urchins, the situation seemed sweet. The Japanese paid big money for urchin eggs, and word was that you could make \$1,000 a day. People trekked all the way from Alaska with their scuba gear.

"There was a gold rush mentality," says dive instructor Joe Mokry. But while some harvesters did land big bucks, the boom yielded other consequences as well. "The industry drew so many people so quickly," says Mokry. "A lot had zero scuba training, and others were taking crash courses. Fatalities were inevitable."

A handful of diving accidents and a spate of boating mishaps later, the boom is going bust. "The urchins have been overharvested," says state biologist Ted Creaser, who now wonders if the industry can be salvaged at all.

At the boom's peak in 1993, divers harvested 41 million pounds of the spiny, baseball-sized urchins. Japanese buyers purchased the eggs, or roe, which are considered a delicacy in Japan. But the harvest dropped to around 30 million pounds in 1995, and Creaser expects catches to

continue dwindling.

Before buyers arrived in Maine in the late 1980s (they'd fled depleted Japanese and California stocks), urchins were considered a nuisance. "Lobster fishermen complained they were taking over the bottom," says Kerry Lyons, a diver for the Maine Department of Marine Resources. "Twenty feet down there were urchins on top of urchins. Fishermen would crush them instead of throwing them back." But by 1993, 1,670 divers had obtained urchin licenses, and another 972 licensed "draggers" combed the surf at low tide. Now, Lyons says, you can't find an urchin in under 30 feet of water.

Creaser hopes the state legislature will enact harvesting limits, but he doubts it. "We're proposing some new regulations, but they're still making substantial catches in the eastern part of the state. As long as that's happening, the industry won't listen." Meanwhile, look for Japanese demand to cause booms elsewhere. Says Creaser: "I hear they've just started harvesting urchins in New Zealand and Ghana."

—PAUL KVINTA

REEF BRIEFS

► New Zealand.

The Envelope, Please. Bill Ballantine finally has something sweet to go with his preserves. The marine biologist, who has worked for more than 20 years to create strict "no-take" marine sanctuaries, is one of six winners of this year's prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

It took Ballantine more than a decade to convince authorities to establish the first no-take reserve in his native New Zealand. Today, there are 13 such reserves, which ban fishing, construction and discharge. Ballantine helped create a no-take reserve in British Columbia in 1992 and his sanctuaries have become models for other conservationists worldwide. Similar reserves are planned for the Florida Keys and in Monterey, Calif.

—KAREN SCHWARTZ

► Cayman Islands.

Anniversary Celebration.

Divers the world over are wishing the Cayman Marine Parks a happy 10th anniversary. The park system was created in April 1986 to protect the fragile coral reef ecosystem in the face of a booming tourism industry. The effort has paid off. Readers of Rodale's Scuba Diving recently ranked all three of the Cayman Islands in the Top 10 Caribbean destinations and gave Little Cayman top honors for healthiest Caribbean reefs.

The anniversary celebration, sponsored by the Cayman Island Watersports Operators Association and the island government's Protection and Conservation Unit, continues throughout the year under the slogan "Cayman Islands' Marine Parks—SEA Our Future Tomorrow...Together."





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CIRCLE NO. 37 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Dive Knives

Our review of underwater cutlery gets right to the point. ~ by John Francis

The only piece of my original diving equipment I still have is a knife, big and black with a shiny long blade. Our scuba instructor told us to buy a dive knife, the bigger the better, and no one in the class asked why. Who wants explanations when you have permission?

Probably we visualized a desperate fight with some monster of the deep involving writhing tentacles and flashing blades. Anyway, it seemed self-evident that when you were doing big, manly things like scuba diving and hunting, you needed to carry a big, manly knife. Of course those were prehistoric times, before "The Jenny Jones Show."

Today, when our consciousness is up and our confidence is down, we might feel silly strapping on the BFK (for Big Friggin' Knife). It's bulky, it's snag-prone, and its flashing blade never did have much of an edge anyway unless you were one of those who

are obsessive about washing, sharpening and oiling knives, and frankly I stayed away from those guys. For most divers, the BFK became a pry bar, a poker, a pop-top lifter and not much else.

But the ocean is getting more crowded, more littered and it's more likely you'll need to cut things under water now. They won't be tentacles, though—they'll be monofilament fishing lines, polypropylene lobster pot lines, polyester fishing nets and nylon anchor lines. At the same time, manufacturers have begun to look at the dive knife as a tool instead of a symbol, and the result has been a number of recent innovations.

Titanium Wonders

Some companies have addressed the edge-retention issue. The problem is that stainless steel is not really rustproof, and in salt water the fine edge is the first thing to go (see "Points, Edges and

A CUT ABOVE	OCEAN MASTER Titanium	SCUBAPRO Titanium	SPORT DIVERS Sea Snips	AKONA Sidekick 2	DACOR Claw & Rigger Line Cutters	SPORT DIVERS Fury Skeleton	DACOR Mikado
							
	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
OVERALL LENGTH WITH SHEATH	9.5"	9.5"	9"	7.5"	3" (Rigger) 3" (Claw)	9"	9.5"
BLADE LENGTH	4.5"	4.5", 5.5"	1.75"	3.75"	NA	4"	4.5"
BLADE MATERIAL	titanium	titanium	420 stainless steel	304 stainless steel (blunt tip is 420)	NA	440 stainless steel	420 stainless steel
EDGE	straight, medium serrated	straight, medium serrated	straight, very finely serrated	straight, coarse serrated	NA	straight, fine serrated	straight, coarse serrated
TIP	blunt or round point	Drop Point	blunt	round point, drop point or blunt	NA	round point	blunt or drop point
SHEATH	quick release with rubber leg straps	quick release with rubber leg straps	nylon with velcro closure, belt loop	quick release with belt loops, hose mount groove, leg straps	NA	quick release with leg straps	quick release with rubber leg straps
PRICE	\$89	\$170 (4.5"), \$200 (5.5")	\$15	\$41	\$5	\$20	\$40
FROM	Ocean Master (800) 841-7007	Scubapro (800) 467-2822	Sport Divers (800) 327-0244	Akona (423) 690-1814	Dacor (847) 446-9555	Sport Divers (800) 327-0244	Dacor (847) 446-9555
COMMENTS	Blunt point is a welcome option. Good value.	One-finger quick release is easy to operate. Nice grip, handsome finish, stylish look, but the price...	Cuts anything that will fit in its jaws faster and easier than a knife. Flat sheath has a sensible Velcro closure.	Handle is a little too small for big hands and serrated section is both coarse and short, restricting sawing. But an easy one-finger quick release, versatile mounting and a compact package.	One-purpose tool, but perfectly adapted to that purpose.	Big knife in a slim package. Quick release is a no-brainer, but might open accidentally.	Smooth quick release. Lanyard hole in handle is a plus.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE ESSIG

Alloys"). One solution is titanium. This wonder metal is stronger per pound than stainless steel, holds an excellent edge and is virtually rustproof. Scubapro makes long and medium-length titanium blades with sharp tips; Ocean Master offers medium-length blunt-tip and sharp-tip models. Both brands have quick-release sheaths. The Ocean Master has a white patch inset in the handle, making it easier to find if you drop it. At a suggested retail price of \$89, you'll want to look for it. At \$170, the Scubapro knife isn't cheap either, but look for more brands and, inevitably, lower prices next year. No piece of equipment is maintenance-free, but the titanium knife comes pretty close.

WHICH IS SHARPEST?

The one that is sharpened most expertly and most recently. All these knives come from the factory with a fair to middling edge, but from that point you're on your own. So I've made no attempt to rate knives for sharpness. Ratings are based on apparent workmanship, ease of use and fitness for their intended purpose.

Downsized Knives

Seeing the knife as a tool naturally prompted manufacturers to ask whether the traditional knife really had to be so big to cut such tiny lines. The result is the medium-sized stainless steel blade with a quick-release sheath. Almost every full-line equipment company sells an assortment of such knives with different edges and points. Shown in the charts on pages 14 and 16,

the Cutter from International Divers, Deep See's #8287, U.S. Divers' Sabre and the Mikado from Dacor are typical of many. The blades are four to five inches long, as are the handles, making lighter, more compact packages than the BFK. Its utility is obvious, and the medium-size knife is quickly becoming standard equipment.

If smaller than the BFK is better, is the smallest knife the best? Some companies would have you think so, offering blades as short as two inches. Unfortunately, the handles of these mini-knives are as short as the blades, making them hard to use, especially when wearing gloves. The bottom limit of practicality may be something like the Akona Sidekick 2 with a three-and-one-half-inch blade, same length handle and an excellent one-finger quick-release. It can be mounted to a hose.

A better way to make the knife less bulky is the flat, one-piece style like the

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CIRCLE NO. 28 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Fury from Sport Divers and the Ranger from Zeagle. Both snuggle to your leg or BC, lessening the likelihood of snagging. The Ranger is smallest, with a sheath that attaches permanently via plastic rivets to your wetsuit or BC. The snap that releases the knife is difficult to operate, though. The Fury is still fairly small and its sheath has a nice, simple quick-release mechanism.

A folding knife is another way to reduce the package size while retaining usability. St. Claire's KLR Raptor (macho symbolism isn't dead yet) is a good example. The two-and-one-half-inch curved blade unfolds from a three-and-one-half-inch handle and locks so it can't close accidentally on your fingers. A large ring lets you clip it to your BC. I found the release (allowing you to fold the knife) hard to operate, but it seemed to loosen up with use.

Alternate Cutters

Oceanic has picked up on the theme of the dive knife as all-purpose tool with the Tiburon, featuring adjustable hand

guard, straight and serrated edges, a screwdriver/chisel tip, an end-wrench-like slot for turning bolts and, yes, a bottle opener.

Other manufacturers have given thought to the problem of cutting the tough man-made fibers that stymie even sharp knives. One result is Dacor's pair of line cutters. Each is tiny, unobtrusive and sudden death to monofilament while presenting no danger to hoses or fingers.

The best tool for dealing with lines, nets and what have you may be paramedic's shears, such as the Sea Snips from Sport Divers, Innovative Scuba Concepts and others. They rip through nearly anything, even half-inch nylon anchor line, in one snip. Of course they may require you to change your self-image from slayer of great beasts to underwater seamstress. If that bothers you, maybe Jenny Jones can help.

Points, Edges and Alloys

Standard knives, whether BFK, medium-sized or mini, come with two types of edges and three types of tips. Stainless

steel comes in many flavors. How to choose?

Edges may be straight or serrated. Many knives have both. Straight edges cut plastic better, from monofilament fishing line to nylon rope; on the other hand, when the straight edge is dull your only hope may be to saw with the serrated edge. Serrated edges cut kelp and natural fibers better, but coarse serration will just snag small line instead of cutting it.

Tips may be blunt or chisel-shaped, like Ocean Master's Titanium and the Deep See #8287, round-pointed like the Ranger and the Fury or drop-pointed like the Scubapro Titanium. Spearfishermen may need a sharp point to finish the job on a still-wiggling fish, but for the rest of us, a point may be more ornamental than useful: If you use your knife tip for hacking, digging, prying and chiseling you risk breaking it off.

Manufacturers use either 300-series or 400-series stainless steel. The 300-series alloys resist corrosion best and are not as brittle as the 400-series alloys, but won't hold an edge as well. On the other hand, a

400-series knife will stay sharp longer but may break if used as a pry bar. No stainless steel knife is truly rustproof or maintenance-free, so it's a question of what kind of maintenance you want to do. If you wash and oil a 400-series knife after every use, you won't have to sharpen it as often. A 300-series knife can skip a wash or two, but needs frequent sharpening. If you never touch either, a 300-series knife will at least look prettier. ☺

Field editor John Francis lives on a boat in Ventura, Calif.

A CUT ABOVE	DEEP SEE #8287	IDI The Cutter	OCEANIC Tiburon	U.S. DIVERS Sabre	ST. CLAIRE KLR Raptor	ZEAGLE Ranger
						
	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆	☆☆
OVERALL LENGTH WITH SHEATH	10.5"	11.25"	10.25"	10"	4"	7"
BLADE LENGTH	4.5"	5.25"	4.5"	4.5"	2.75"	2.5"
BLADE MATERIAL	420 stainless steel	440 stainless steel	304 stainless steel	304 stainless steel	420 stainless steel	420 stainless steel
EDGE	straight, medium serrated	straight, coarse serrated	straight, coarse serrated	straight, coarse serrated	coarse serrated	straight, medium serrated
TIP	blunt	round point	blunt or sharp	blunt (round point available)	scythe point, rounded tip optional	round point
SHEATH	quick release with rubber leg straps	quick release with rubber leg straps	quick release with belt loop, leg straps	quick release with rubber leg straps	delrin handle with open-blade lock, pocket clip, attachment hole	nylon, with retaining strap, belt loop and rivets
PRICE	\$37	\$29	\$80	\$46	\$23	\$27
FROM	Deep See (360) 435-6696	International Divers (800) 257-2822	Oceanic (510) 562-0500	U.S. Divers (714) 540-8010	St. Claire Diving Products (707) 763-3483	Zeagle Systems (813) 782-5568
COMMENTS	See the IDI Cutter.	This and the Deep See are virtually identical midsized knives, obviously from the same Taiwan manufacturer. Good grip, fair quick release, visibility patch on handles are pluses. Coarse serration is not very useful.	Diver's Swiss Army knife, it is useful around wrecks. Bulky package, though.	With stainless butt cap; colored handle helps you find it if you drop it; wide hand guards improve grip.	Serrations are too wicked for anything but kelp, for which they are overkill.	Less is not more. Handle and blade are too small, and sheath is almost impossible to release while wearing gloves.

San Marcos River, Texas

**Flowing from the limestone heart of Texas is a drift diver's treat
a spring-fed circus of curious critters. Just beware the giant prawns, pardner.**

BY PAUL KVINTA

Nestled in the heart of the rolling Central Texas Hill Country, the San Marcos River gurgles to life from limestone springs in the middle of the relaxed college town bearing its name. Four miles below the springs, the San Marcos merges with the Blanco River and flows southeasterly for 78 miles to its confluence with the Guadalupe River.

The brief upper San Marcos, with its voluminous water flow (292 cubic feet per second) and constant temperature (72F), supports a circus of exotic flora and fauna, with several endangered species found few other places in the world: inch-long fountain darters, slithering freshwater eels, San Marcos salamanders, aquatic fields of Texas wild rice, and giant prawns, which can grow up to 20 inches.

We make our first dive underneath Pepper's at the Falls restaurant—a popular student hangout spanning the waterfall that rushes over the Spring Lake spillway. Hugging the river bottom, we forcefully fin our way under the falls to explore three concrete chambers beneath the dam, where elusive freshwater eels reside. Although we don't see any eels, we do witness schools of blue gill and perch pecking at the fossilized rams' horn snails that blanket the river bottom. Outside the falls, the river teems with other species of wildlife as well—small red crayfish, four types of bass, 55 species of perch and roughly 43 species of anchored and floating plants.

But on a night dive, we concentrate on finding the elusive giant prawns. Commercial fishermen seriously depleted the prawn population during the late 1800s, and although the animal is no longer harvested, its numbers have never seriously bounced back. We suit up at 10:30 p.m. beneath a canopy of ancient oaks near the waterfall and submerge into the

shallow six- and eight-foot depths.

Following the rocky ledges along the bank, we train our spotlights on the nooks and crannies where the hungry rascals spend their days burrowing and snoozing. There! One freezes in the light beam. And there! The prawns emerge slowly from their dens like hulking praying mantises, wary of the light, but unafraid. In a show of force, one extends its pincers menacingly. We flick the light off and on again, and they're gone.

The river winds west through Sewell Park on the campus of Southwest

Texas State University and banks south through City Park, with depths varying between three and 12 feet.

For a third of a mile, the current sweeps us over undulating forests of grasses that rise and fall in our spotlights. Schools of perch cruise with us then break away, and we bail out of the current to follow largemouth bass through

the vegetation. Carp hang motionless under lily pads, forcing us to twist and twirl to avoid disturbing their eerie trance.

We drift under a railroad trestle and into Rio Vista Park, where depths reach 15 feet and an overgrown island occupies the middle of the river. The island signals a good stopping point because visibility beyond it decreases. And Rio Vista is actually better to visit during the day when packs of mossback turtles, ranging in size from silver dollar to shoe boxes, sun themselves atop clumps of lily pads.

The park also features the San Marcos River's primary cultural wealth—scores of Native American stone tools covering the riverbed around the islands (locals quickly remind divers to leave these artifacts in the river). Researchers believe nomadic bands of hunters and gatherers camped regularly along the San Marcos 11,000 years ago, fishing for perch and bass. No doubt they stalked giant prawns as well.

Paul Kvinta is an RSD field editor.



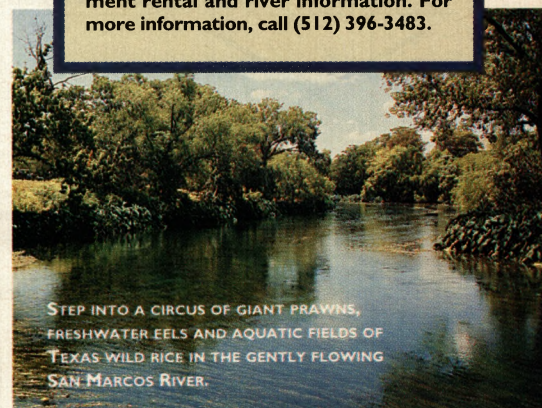
DIVE IN

The town of San Marcos is located midway between Austin and San Antonio. Take I-35 (south out of Austin, north from San Antonio) to the Hwy. 82 exit. You'll find the springs about a mile west of the exit.

Because of the constant 72F temperatures, diving is year-round on the San Marcos River, although topside temperatures in central Texas can dip below freezing from December through March. Visibility ranges from 25 to 40 feet over the river's first three-quarters of a mile, which is the best area to dive. Because giant prawns, freshwater eels and crayfish are nocturnal, be sure to plan for a night dive.

If you want to drift dive, it's best to bring two vehicles and park one at Pepper's restaurant near the falls and the other at Rio Vista Park.

Currently in San Marcos, only the **Dive Shop**, located about a mile from campus on Ranch Road 12, offers equipment rental and river information. For more information, call (512) 396-3483.



STEP INTO A CIRCUS OF GIANT PRAWNS, FRESHWATER EELS AND AQUATIC FIELDS OF TEXAS WILD RICE IN THE GENTLY FLOWING SAN MARCOS RIVER.



The Equalizer Z4 and Dry Snorkel 2000. Keeping you totally dry.

Clearing your mask is now quick and easy. All you do is exhale and the water in the mask disappears. Ocean Master's advanced Low Profile Purge allows you to clear water out of your mask without lifting (or displacing) the mask. Keeps your hands free at all times.

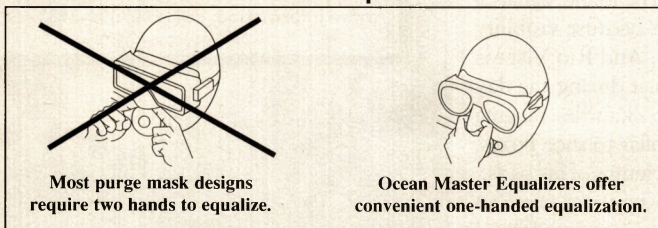


Almost invisible, advanced Low Profile Purge is located at the lowest point of the mask for complete water clearing--zero water residual.

Exposed nose pockets are extremely easy to access for equalization of inner ear pressure.

Choose from the widest selection of mask styles: the four window Z4 (above), the two window Z2, aviator-look Provision or the single window Equalizer One. Extra thick long lasting silicone skirting offers the closest

One-Handed Equalization



Most purge mask designs require two hands to equalize.

Ocean Master Equalizers offer convenient one-handed equalization.

fit, even for those with moustaches.

The patented Q-Strap is included on every mask.

All-new Q-Strap Quick Adjustment



Pull to Fit



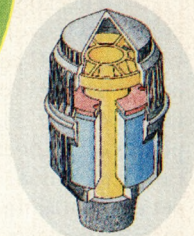
Squeeze to Release

Never clear water again! The Dry Snorkel 2000 will do all the work for you. It resists waves and splashes keeping the airway dry even when completely submerged.

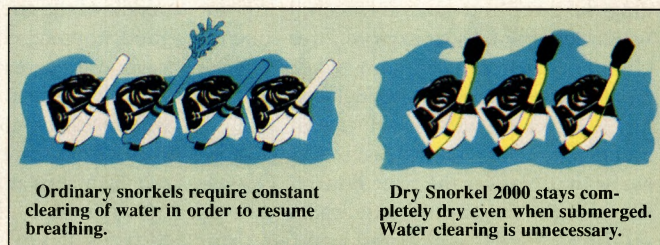
Simply surface the water and the automatic pressure release valve opens the airway for an immediate breath of air.

Feel confident in the water. This award winning design has proven, over the years, to be the most effective way for a snorkel to be built totally dry. The one-way valve even allows exhale underwater.

This incredibly totally dry snorkel also includes the patented Ball Jointed Mouthpiece for the most perfect three-dimensional



Cylindrical float (blue) and pressure release valve (red) move upward upon water contact, closing the air passage (yellow shaft).



Ordinary snorkels require constant clearing of water in order to resume breathing.

Dry Snorkel 2000 stays completely dry even when submerged. Water clearing is unnecessary.

fit, a large bore for maximum inhale capacity, a flexible tube with fold-back memory, and an advanced self draining purge valve.

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CIRCLE NO. 67 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Door Peninsula, Wis.

Centuries of shipping accidents have opened
a range of opportunities for divers in the Dairy State.

BY STEVE HARRINGTON

Many thought it was a miracle that all 21 crewmen aboard the *Frank O'Connor* were rescued from a fire that claimed the ship in 1919. The 301-foot steamer was loaded with coal from Buffalo, N.Y., and bound for Milwaukee when it caught fire in northern Lake Michigan near the Door Peninsula. The ship rapidly burned to the waterline and sank. Remarkably, all aboard were saved by the crew from a nearby lighthouse.

To the shipping world, the *Frank O'Connor* was a total loss, but divers visiting the Door Peninsula find her far from worthless. Since the remains were discovered in 60 feet of water in 1990, the wreck has become one of the most popular dive sites in the Great Lakes.

Divers enjoy exploring the massive triple-expansion steam engine that rises 35 feet off the bottom. Twin Scotch steam boilers are intact at the stern of the wreck where a four-blade propeller and massive rudder are home to schools of whitefish and burbot.

While the midsection of the wreck offers little to examine except a charred cargo hold, the bow of the *Frank O'Connor* is a museum of machinery. A massive anchor, anchor chain and steam windlass are intact. Smaller artifacts, like wooden rigging blocks, can also be found on the wreck, but only divers with the proper state permits are allowed to remove them.

The wreck is swept by a slight current that can alter visibility, and a quarter-inch wetsuit or dry suit is recommended for much of the summer diving season. From August to September, surface water temps warm to just over 70F. Below the thermocline, however, the water is a chilly 50F.

Divers looking for other shipwrecks to fill a summer weekend will find no shortage along the rocky shores of the Door Peninsula. The

waters are littered with ill-fated vessels, many of which were attempting to find safe passage to and from Green Bay but fell victim to the storms that rise quickly on Lake Michigan. Divers will find the remains of one such vessel, the *Fleetwing*, in Garrett Bay. In 1888, the 136-foot, three-masted schooner was sailing from Menominee, Mich., to Chicago with a load of lumber. In heavy winds, her captain mistakenly steered into a treacherous channel known as "Death's

Door" and the vessel ran aground. The wreckage is located in 10 to 25 feet of water and is accessible by boat or shore.

Another popular shipwreck is the *Carrington*, a 215-foot schooner that wrecked off Hat Island in Green Bay.

The vessel was carrying a cargo of pig iron when it got lost in fog and crashed onto a shoal. Today, divers find partially intact remains of the 1880s schooner and her cargo in 35 to 60 feet of water. ☺

Noted Great Lakes diver Steve Harrington is the author of Divers Guide to Wisconsin.



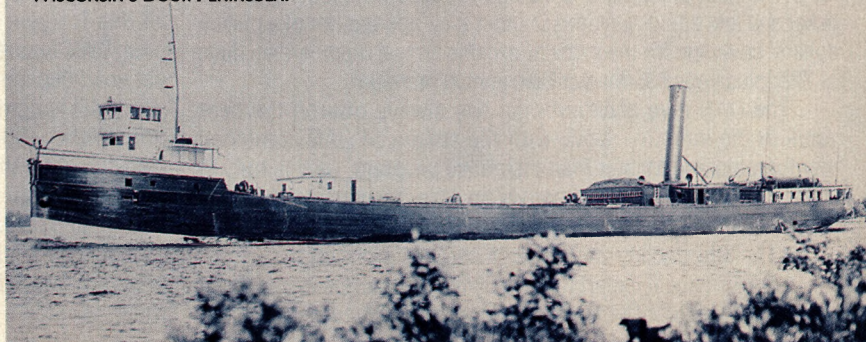
DIVE IN

The Door Peninsula juts into Lake Michigan and is a popular tourist destination known for cultural activities, hiking and watersports. For information on dining and accommodations, contact the Door County Chamber of Commerce (414-743-4456) in Sturgeon Bay. The history of many area shipwrecks can be found at the Door County Maritime Museum (414-854-1844) in Gills Rock.

Divers can expect visibility to range from 10 to 35 feet in Lake Michigan, with 15 to 25 feet the average. In Green Bay, visibility is somewhat less but divers can generally find 10 to 20 feet of visibility. In late summer and early autumn, surface water temperatures often warm to 70F in Lake Michigan and to 75F in Green Bay. A good wetsuit or dry suit is required for most of the diving season.

Special diving events around the Door Peninsula are organized by **Green Bay Scuba** in Green Bay (414-498-8499). Charter services to the *Frank O'Connor* and other shipwrecks of Door County are available through **M&M Diving** in Menominee, Mich. (906-863-7330) and **On the Rocks Charter** in Sister Bay, Wis. (414-854-2808). Information on local shore diving is available from **Sport 'N Dive** (414-824-5815) near Sturgeon Bay.

IN BETTER DAYS, THE *FRANK O'CONNOR* RAN COAL ACROSS THE GREAT LAKES. NOW HER WRECKAGE IS AN UNDERWATER MUSEUM OF STEAMSHIP MACHINERY LOCATED OFF WISCONSIN'S DOOR PENINSULA.



DAN

**DIVERS
ALERT
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DAN MEMBERS GET MORE PROTECTION FOR THE SAME PRICE

By Barry Shuster, DAN Director of Marketing

Since May 1, all DAN members have been getting more protection than ever before with expanded coverage through DAN TravelAssist and the upgraded DAN Master Plan dive accident insurance policy.

As a DAN member, you now receive \$100,000 evacuation assistance through DAN TravelAssist—DAN's emergency medical evacuation service, which is automatically available with membership—more than double the amount of assistance previously offered.

And there's even more good news for DAN members. Holders of DAN's \$35 Master Plan insurance now receive \$125,000 coverage for decompression illness and all covered in-water injuries, plus an additional \$1,500 accommodations, \$1,000 airline ticket and \$2,500 lost dive equipment coverage to ease the sting of these incidental losses in the unfortunate event of a dive accident. This is an automatic upgrade for DAN members who have chosen the Master Plan—at no extra charge.

If you've been considering upgrading to the DAN Master Plan, now is the time to do it. With your automatic DAN TravelAssist benefits, plus coverage in the amounts of \$125,000 for dive accidents, \$15,000 for accidental death or dismemberment, \$15,000 for permanent disability and \$5,000 for accommodations, airline ticket and lost equipment, this is more than one-quarter of a million dollars' coverage for the same affordable annual membership dues of \$25, plus your \$35 Master Plan annual premium.

The DAN dive accident plan has always offered the best value in the industry. Now, with the enhanced DAN combined membership and Master Plan insurance program, DAN is truly in a class of its own. There simply is no other reasonable choice in a dive accident program when you consider:

- The affordability and value of the DAN program;
- DAN medical experts are available 24 hours a day at Duke University Medical Center to coordinate treatment, evacuation



and insurance for injured divers. When it's 2 a.m., and you think you may have the bends, "Please leave a message at the tone" doesn't cut it;

• DAN is the international dive emergency service upon which other dive accident insurance programs rely when their policyholders are injured.

As a DAN member, you also receive a subscription to *Alert Diver*, DAN's award-winning magazine dedicated to dive safety and health, eligibility for the DAN Tag and a host of other special member discounts. In addition, all new DAN members receive a copy of the *DAN Dive and Travel Medical Guide* when they join—all this for your DAN membership price of \$25 per year, plus your DAN insurance premium, which ranges from \$25 to \$35 per year, depending on the plan you choose.

DAN is committed to remaining Your Dive Safety Association. We're working harder than ever to increase the scope of DAN benefits, the quality of DAN service and the pride of DAN membership through our medical services and research, which benefit all divers.

For more information on DAN's membership and insurance programs, talk to a DAN Member Services Representative at (800) 446-2671.

Oh my god, is it August already? Yes, and you forgot to put in for vacation time again, didn't you? And you forgot to make travel reservations. Better get off the couch.

If you're lucky—that is, if you can put off your vacation until September, October or November—you can make your blunder look like smart planning. After Labor Day, resort bookings worldwide drop dramatically. This may be your best time to travel after all.

"Lots of resorts panic," says Kathy Nichols-Kirchner of Destination Unknown Exotic Travel (DUET). "Every year after Labor Day, we suddenly get a bunch of faxes from resorts offering half-price for the second person, extra nights free, and lots of other great deals." Likewise, charter air prices drop after Labor Day, and airlines often declare fare wars. The result of your procrastination can be the dive vacation you've always wanted at a price you can't believe. Now you're showing those management skills.

Gotta Have It Now

We'll tell you how to look like a winner in a minute, but first, what if the boss says it's August for your vacation or never? You've got a problem. August is the month when several hundred million other vacationers, including the entire populace of European countries with fistfuls of francs and deutsche marks, are elbowing up to the counter, grabbing the reservations and

The Quick and the Cheap

We found 21 book-today, leave-tomorrow dive vacations for you.

Plus: Hints to help you find some of your own.

by JOHN FRANCIS

Puerto Rico
\$571

Machalilla Nat'l Park, Ecuador
\$1,350

Bunaken, Indonesia
\$659





Turks & Caicos
\$999

filling the waiting lists. Don't look for unbelievable deals right now.

But don't despair. Your first step should be calling dive travel specialists (listed in RSD's Dive Travel Directory, May '96). They have contracted in advance for hotel rates and bulk airfares, and can sell you a bargain package as early as three days in advance, if space is available. But chances are you can still book your dive vacation at a major league destination, still have some of the best diving of your life and pay reasonable prices—even if you book at the last moment.

How? "Look for lots of rooms and lots of air," says Phil Carta of Caribbean Adventures/World Dive Adventures. He means your chances of finding an opening are better at a destination where there are many hotels and hotel rooms, and many airlines that fly in and out. You're operating on the principle that there's always room for one more. By contrast,

that six-room hideaway resort with the perfect reef and one flight a week is probably booked solid.

► **Lots of rooms.** Try the Caymans ("A hotel for every bank," says Carta), the Bahamas, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and Cozumel, for example. From the West Coast, try Hawaii. Kona has a surplus of hotel rooms.

► **Lots of flights.** They tend to be to the same places, for obvious

reasons. Cayman Airways alone has three flights daily from Miami; Nassau in the Bahamas is served by Delta, American Airlines, USAir and others; likewise, most of the majors and many charters fly to the ABCs, Cozumel or Cancun, and Hawaii.

Though a last-minute August vaca-



Cozumel
\$219

tion means you won't often be far from the madding crowds, there are consolations.

► Summer is considered the low season in the Caribbean, and if you don't mind the heat (you'll be in the water anyway), room rates can be as little as half of the December-to-April price.

► You may be limited to the popular destinations, but remember that they became popular for a reason: great diving.

► Under water, you leave the crowds, noise and hassles behind.

► Even when crowded, diving Grand Cayman or Hawaii is better than staying with your in-laws in Peoria.

Falling Into a Great Deal

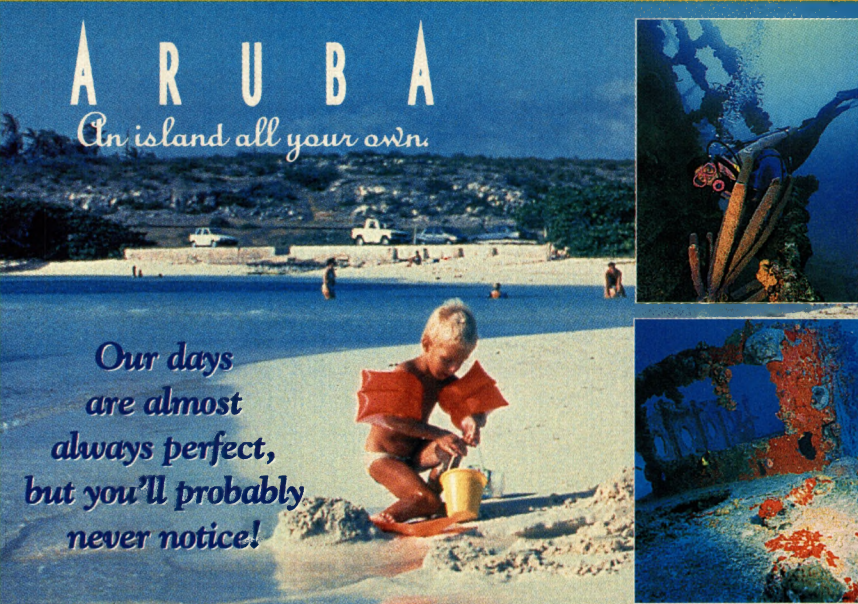
Ah, but if you can take your vacation in September, October or November, you are truly fortune's child. You can choose your destination and expect good weather, peace and quiet, and lower than low prices. "That's when my wife and I take our vacation," says John Hessburg of U.S. Dive Travel. "The crowds are gone, the weather is milder, tickets are easier to get and service personnel are nicer because they've had a chance to recover a bit from the summer season. It's wonderful."

It's cheap, too, because this is the time—if ever—when hotel rooms and airline seats go begging. You can pick up these bargains yourself if you have the time and patience to make the calls and put it all together. As airline reservation systems become accessible to the public through the Internet, more and more travelers will become their own travel agents.

But for now at least, you will more than likely get the best deal if you put yourself in the hands of a competent dive travel specialist. They know better than anyone where the latest deals are and have the purchasing power to deliver better prices, even with their commission tacked on, than you can get on your own.

They also know the resorts better than you do, and want to send you to a good one. As Phil Carta points out, "If you phone the resort yourself, of course they'll tell you their place is wonderful, even if it is a dump. But I won't send you to a dump because then you wouldn't call me back next time. It wouldn't be in my best interest."

What may be more important, dive



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but you'll probably
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CIRCLE NO. 5 ON READER SERVICE CARD

travel specialists know the people at the resorts, the airlines and the air charter companies. Frequently, a hotel may be full but may have a few rooms reserved for family, friends and emergencies. The travel specialist who's in good with the manager may be able to pull one out for you.

Here are some ways to get the most from your dive travel specialist:

► **Use "attaboys."** Be generous with your appreciation. If you're a repeat customer or a referral from a friend, say so. It's human nature to try

harder for someone who appreciates you. How hard your agent tries will make all the difference in the world.

► **Be clear.** "Don't be afraid to use the word 'cheap,'" says Hessburg, if cheap is what you're after. Same goes for the kind of diving you want and beds you'll sleep in. Say *exactly* what you want.

► **Be flexible.** If there is some wiggle room in your dates, if you'd be happy with an alternate destination or can fly midweek (much lower airfares),



Treasure Island
DIVERS

GRAND CAYMAN, B.W.I.

UNLIMITED DIVING!

If you're going on vacation to dive, don't let a limited budget stop you. Dive as much as you like - within the safety limits, of course - but don't spend a lot of money!



	Unlimited Diving Package	Cost if Full Price*	Savings
3 days diving	\$200	\$360	\$160
4 days diving	\$265	\$480	\$215
5 days diving	\$330	\$600	\$270
6 days diving	\$400	\$720	\$320

*For one 2-tank a.m. dive and one 2-tank p.m. dive

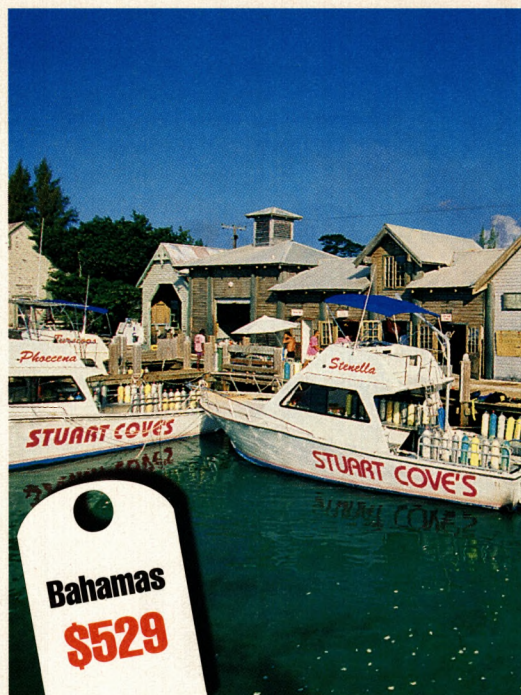
Cayman Direct **1-800-872-7552**

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FAX 809-949-7125 Some restrictions apply, holiday weeks excluded.

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CIRCLE NO. 30 ON READER SERVICE CARD



say so. You might end up with a better deal.

► **Put down a deposit.** Committing \$50 or \$100 shows the wholesaler you're serious, and he'll be serious too.

► **Plan ahead.** This is advice for next year, but if you can give the travel specialist 90 days or more to work, you'll get more of what you want for less money.

Now all you have to do is finish three reports, reschedule four meetings, cancel that lunch, renew your passport, kennel the dog, stop the mail and go. Don't forget your tickets.

DIVE IT NOW

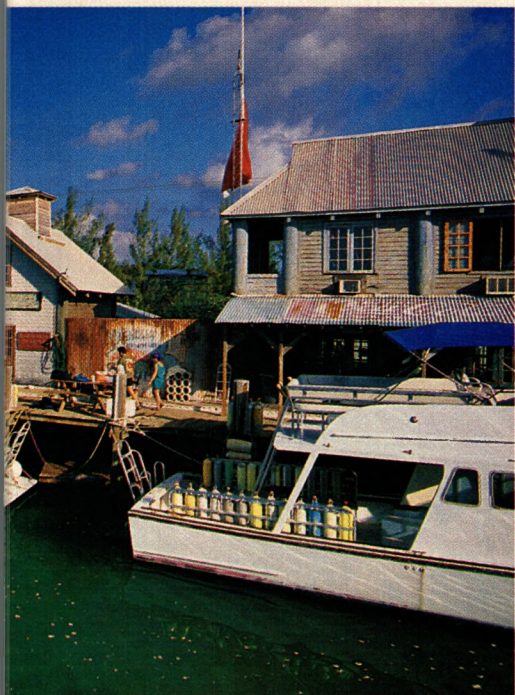
Even in August, there are some pretty good dive travel deals. We've listed what look to us like some of the best buys at press time, but they're subject to space availability. Prices below are per person, double occupancy, including some extras, excluding some taxes. Call for details. Deals were solicited from travel wholesalers or received directly from resorts.

Aruba

► Seven nights at the Sonesta Beach Hotel, four-tank dives daily, night dives, \$789 plus airfare. Call Sonesta Beach Resorts at (800) 766-3782.

► Seven nights at the Amsterdam Manor, two boat dives daily, \$1,056 including airfare from Miami. Call Ocean Connection, (800) 365-6232.

GREG JOHNSTON



Bahamas

► Five nights at South Ocean Golf & Beach Resort, four days of diving with Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, wilderness dive trip, night dive, \$529 plus airfare. Call Destination Unknown Exotic Travel at (800) 990-3839.

Bay Islands

► Seven nights in a beachfront apartment at the Oak Bay Resort on Roatan, six boat dives, unlimited shore diving, \$425 plus airfare. Call Oak Bay Resort, (011) 504-45-2337.

Bonaire

► Seven nights in a suite with kitchen at the Buddy Dive Resort, six 1-tank dives, unlimited shore diving, \$970 including airfare from Miami. Four divers in a two-bedroom suite, \$849 per person. Call Caribbean Adventures Dive Travel at (800) 934-DIVE.

► Seven nights at the Sand Dollar Condominium Resort, two-bedroom, two-bath suite, six days of diving, unlimited shore diving, airfare from Miami, taxes and service charges, \$837 based on quad occupancy (Sept. and Oct.). Call Caradonna Caribbean Tours, (800) 328-2288.

Cayman Islands

► "Ultra Super Saver": Seven nights at the Holiday Inn on Grand Cayman, six days of diving with Don Foster's, daily breakfast, all gov't. taxes and service charges, \$856 per person. Call Don Foster's Reservations, (800) 83-DIVER.

► Seven nights at the Little Cayman Beach

Resort, two-tank boat dives daily, \$1,653 including airfare from Houston. Call Ocean Connection at (800) 365-6232.

► Seven nights at the Brac Reef Beach Resort, all meals and drinks, three-plus tanks of boat diving a day, unlimited shore diving, \$1,398 including airfare from Miami or Tampa. Call Caribbean Dive Tours, (800) 786-DIVE.

Cocos Island

► All-inclusive package on the *Sea Hunter* live-aboard Aug. 24 through Sept. 3, \$2,795

plus airfare. Call See & Sea Travel at (800) DIV-XPRT or (415) 434-3400 in California.

Cozumel

► Seven nights at the Hotel Barracuda, five 2-tank dives, four 1-tank dives, \$219 plus airfare. Call Tropical Adventures Travel at (800) 247-3483.

► Four nights at the Club Cozumel Caribe, all meals and drinks included, \$399 including airfare from Miami. Six 2-tank dives, one night dive, \$199; can be split with a companion. Call



Something very different in Bonaire

At SAND DOLLAR, you will notice something very different for a dive resort - condos.

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Your Friend, the Hurricane

Your friend? Well, it discourages some of those who would be competing with you for rooms in August. A hurricane is dangerous, but also usually gives plenty of warning before striking. A hurricane in one part of the Caribbean has little or no effect a few hundred miles away. The point is not to cross off the entire Caribbean from your travel planning agenda just because of the summer hurricane season. Do, however, buy travel insurance.

Hurricanes are less common in the northern Caribbean and extremely rare in the south, including Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, the Grenadines, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. Another August strategy is to go to the southern hemisphere. In Fiji, for example, the cyclone season is mid-January through March.

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John Francis is an RSD field editor.



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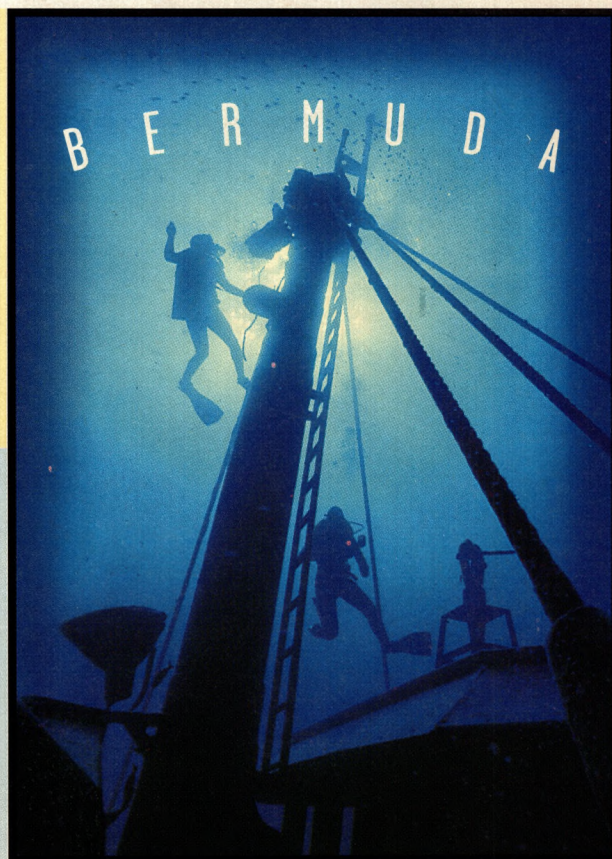


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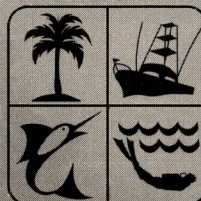
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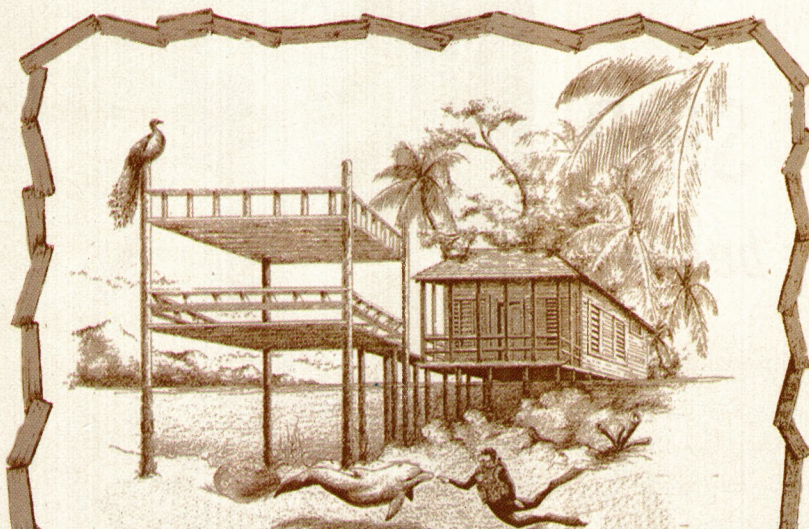


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RSD

An RSD Travel Guide

IT'S FUNNY HOW MICRONESIA CAN BE SO BIG AND SO SMALL AT THE SAME TIME. Islands, some barely the size of football fields, lie scattered over an area the size of the continental United States. If you put all the islands together, you'd have a clump of land the size of Rhode Island. It's no wonder that the history and future of these micro-islands is shaped by the sea.

Whether you're diving Palau's luscious barrier reef, cavorting with the mantas of Yap, time traveling on the dozens of wrecks in Truk Lagoon, exploring Pohnpei's outer islands or beach diving off Kosrae, Micronesia is where man meets sea.

MICRONESIA

Journey rules

It's either the trip of a lifetime or the flight from hell, depending on how you look at it. I prefer the former, although my butt doesn't seem to agree. Eighteen hours,

five snacks, four meals and three moist towelettes later, I find myself in Palau, the first in my five-stop hop across the planet's largest ocean. Let's face it, you've got no choice but to fly forever to get here—even from the West Coast you're looking at 12 hours in a chiropractically incorrect plane seat. To dive here, you've gotta get here, and to get here, you've gotta ride that bird. Want to survive the trip unscathed? Follow these rules:

- Factor in plenty of time to make connections in Los Angeles or San Francisco, as these airports can be very busy, even on weekdays.
- Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothes. This ain't no fashion show. Consider taking a light jacket or sweater that you can don or ditch in a hurry, depending on cabin temperatures.
- Be sure to pack toiletry items in your carry-on, because it's more than likely you'll be overnighting on a plane, in an airport or a hotel. Take a toothbrush, tooth-

IT TAKES TIME,
EFFORT AND
MONEY TO DIVE
THE WESTERN
PACIFIC. WE PUT
MICRONESIA
UNDER THE
MICROSCOPE SO
YOU DON'T WASTE
ANY OF THEM.
BY NICK LUCEY



MAPS BY NICK LUCEY

paste, comb, medications, etc.

► Pack a book—or two.

► Stay well hydrated to stave off fatigue.

► Reset your internal clock. The jet-lag medication Melatonin works for many travelers to help regulate sleep. Palau is 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, while Guam, Yap and Chuuk are 15, Pohnpei 16 and Kosrae 17 hours ahead of EST.

► If you're in the market for earplugs, go silicone.

► When the stewardess walks the aisles to ask if you want to buy the \$4 headphones for the in-flight movie, get them. A movie, even a bad one, can make two hours fly by; staring at the tray table in its full upright and locked position for two hours can seem like six.

► Stay awake during the flight between Honolulu and Guam. That way you'll be able to fall asleep when you get to Guam for the standard overnight stay.

► Ask the concierge or front-desk clerk at your hotel to reconfirm your return flight. You never know when one will be booked solid.

► Show a business card. Deluxe hotels and car-rental agencies will give you a corporate or business rate on rooms and vehicles. Tell 'em you're traveling for business.

► Remember that where there are Japanese, there are higher prices.

I'm not going to lie to you—it's not cheap. Airfare will set you back at least a grand, and a decent hotel about \$100 a night. But out here, it's the bang you get for the buck that makes it all worth it.

Stow away

What you bring and what you forget will make all the difference
(Continued on page 40)



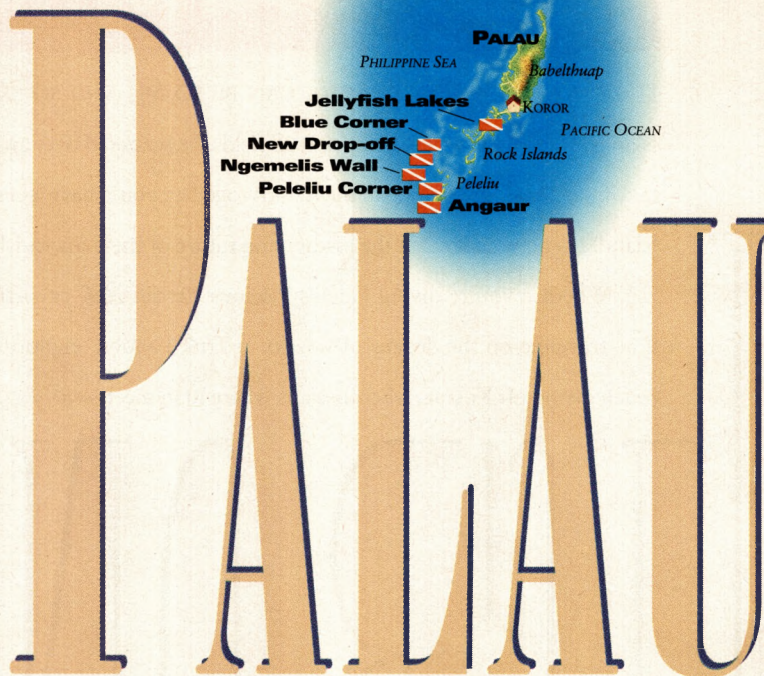
TRAVEL SMARTS

You will need to purchase a \$15 Palau diving permit, available from any dive operator.

Save \$15 for the departure tax on your way out of Palau.

Try the **Rock Island Café** in Koror for good old American eats. **The Furisato Restaurant** is also very popular with locals.

Pack a safety sausage in your dive bag. Exhilarating drift dives sometimes separate you from the rest of the gang.



WE MEET AGAIN

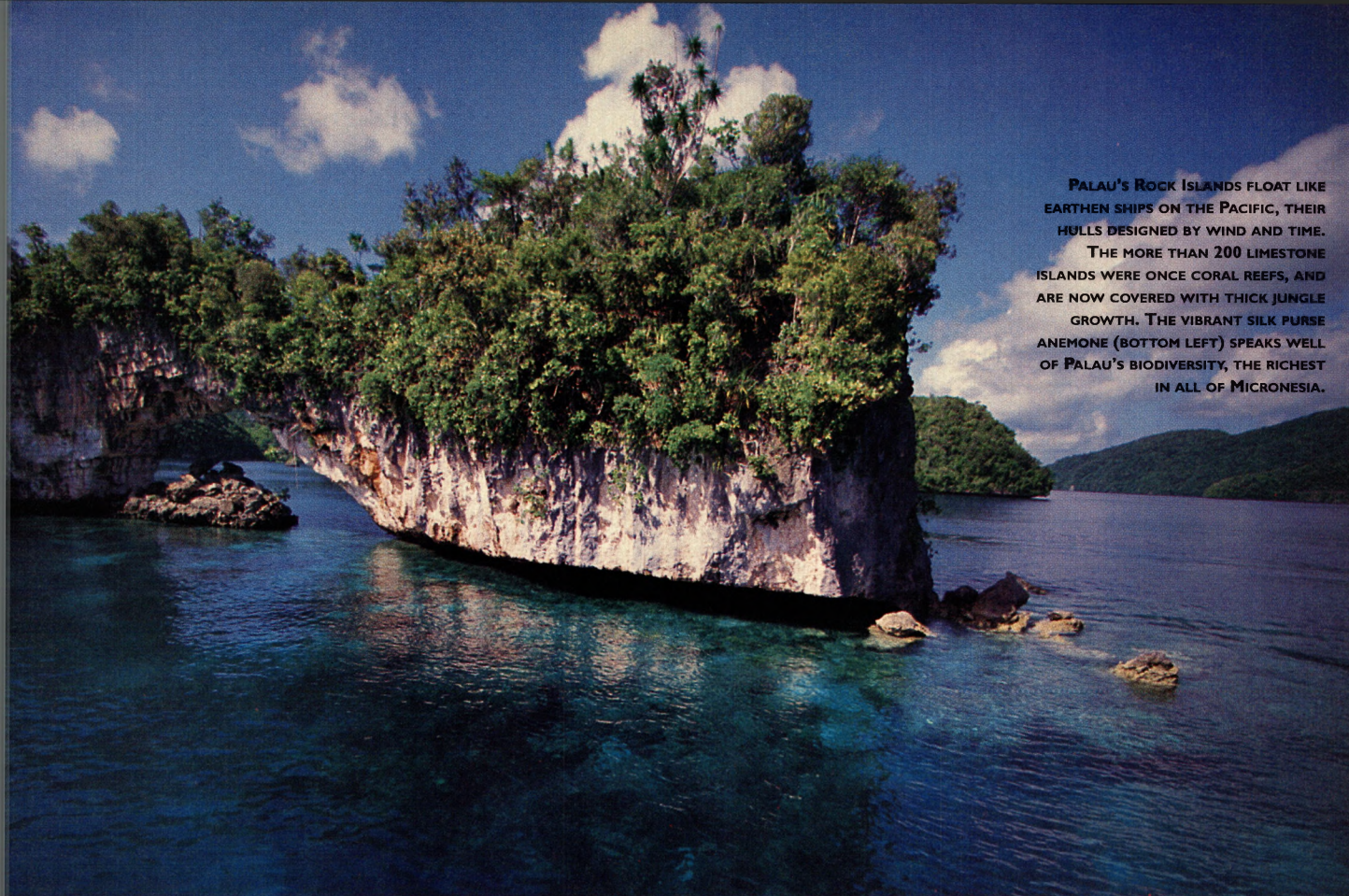
MY NEW JAPANESE DIVER FRIENDS AND I are passing around a bottle of American whiskey and sea stories on the starlit dock of the Carp Island Resort at the southern end of Palau's archipelago. A little more than 50 years ago, we would have been enemies—two peoples fighting over a land that doesn't belong to either of us but to the sea—in a tug-of-war over tiny freckles on the earth's wide ocean face. Just across the channel from where we are sitting is Peleliu, a rocky outcropping of land that saw some of the most intense combat in the War of the Pacific. The blood of thousands of Japanese and American Marines and soldiers stained the beaches there. Ironically, today it draws the soldiers' sons and daughters—now divers and tourists—not to fight for the land, but to celebrate the world beneath it.

This is Palau, a place trying to forget its past while coming to grips with its future: ecotourism. Visitors topped 50,000 in 1995 for the first time ever, and Taiwan just surpassed the United States for the number two position after the Japanese tourism market. Major road construction is under way and a new airport is in the works. All indications point to a new era in Palau's history. Come quickly. Because what you find will amaze you.

Nearly 350 islands are strewn 125 miles from Kayangel in the north to Angaur in the south, just outside the protective barrier reef. Babelthup, the second largest island in Micronesia after Guam, consists of a fringe of crocodile-infested mangrove swamps and dense jungle in its interior. You'll find contrast in the Rock Islands, hundreds of pale-yellow limestone mushrooms sprouting from the ethereal blue, their domes covered in a carpet of green vegetation. Saltwater marine lakes or "Jellyfish Lakes" (actually several of them) are tucked into the pockets of limestone with gelatinous clouds of stingless blobs. The flora and fauna here—the richest in Micronesia—remind you that you're closer to Indonesia and the Philippines than you are to Guam. Scientists speculate that distance from southeast Asia is directly related to the abundance of species in a given area: the closer, the better. Palau has 1,500 species of fish and 700 corals and anemones. Don't forget fruit bats, sea snakes, dugongs, giant clams and birds galore. Then there's Koror, Palau's capital and commercial hub, with a whopping population of 10,000.



RICK HEYDEL



PALAU'S ROCK ISLANDS FLOAT LIKE EARTHEN SHIPS ON THE PACIFIC, THEIR HULLS DESIGNED BY WIND AND TIME.

THE MORE THAN 200 LIMESTONE ISLANDS WERE ONCE CORAL REEFS, AND ARE NOW COVERED WITH THICK JUNGLE GROWTH. THE VIBRANT SILK PURSE ANEMONE (BOTTOM LEFT) SPEAKS WELL OF PALAU'S BIODIVERSITY, THE RICHEST IN ALL OF MICRONESIA.

AMOS NACHOUM

PALAU DIVE IN

Diving



"Where best place you scuba diving?" asks the most English-savvy of the group of Japanese

divers seated around me, a Rolls Royce salesman from Tokyo. I don't have to look any farther than the horizon for my answer. Places like Blue Corner with its resident sharks surfing a current-washed wall, Jellyfish Lake and New Drop-off, a wall that rivals any I've seen in the Caribbean, are well-penned in diving journalism, and for good reason. Any trip this far would be incomplete without these logbook entries.

Lesser-known sites include Ngemelis Wall, the soft coral capital of Palau, with yellow, purple, white and pink mushroom clouds erupting from its sheer face, and turtles and whitetip reef sharks cruising the drop-off.

Remote advanced sites include Peleliu Corner, a giant trevally breeding ground washed by strong currents, Angaur, with some of the best visibility and fewest divers, and Kayangel, 15 miles from the northern tip of Babelthup with its mantas and aggressive sharks.

January through April are the best months to dive, as Palau experiences its dry season and

the wind dies down. But don't worry, in this myriad of islands, there's always a lee. Water temps hang in the low 80Fs year-round.

After all, 4,000 readers can't be wrong: In our "Readers' Choice Top 100" (RSD, February '96), Palau was named best destination by region, second-best for fish life and healthiest reefs, and third for big animals, wall diving and wreck diving.

Dive operations



Five major dive operations cater to Americans. Two are directly associated with specific resorts, although all will take divers staying at any hotel. Palau Diving Center in Koror and at the Carp Island Resort and Splash at the Palau Pacific Resort cater to Americans and Japanese alike, and have a tendency to stick with the most popular sites. Japanese divers are happy going to Blue Corner and Big Drop-off every day, while Americans feel that if they do the same dive twice they're not getting their money's worth. Photo Palau, a full-service photo center, is also located at the Palau Pacific Resort. Fish 'N Fins, Sam's Dive Tours and Neco Marine will take you to the off-the-

beaten-track sites, especially the scores of World War II wrecks in and around Koror that are gaining popularity among divers and still being discovered. For obvious reasons, Japanese divers shun these sunken graves.

Want to dive until you're blue in the face? Take your pick of three live-aboards, the *Ocean Hunter*, *Palau Aggressor II* and Peter Hughes' *Sun Dancer*. Due to the distance they have to travel to get here, many divers combine a week-long cruise with a short land-based package at one of the resorts. Hey, you're going to max out that credit card anyway, right?

Accommodations



If accommodations are any gauge of development, Palau is on the road to becoming another Guam, with its high-rises and tourist traps. Hilton Hotels has plans for a new resort on Palau pending Environmental Protection Agency approval, and Outrigger Hotels is already breaking ground for one of its own.

But for now, the 160-room Palau Pacific Resort (PPR) is the premier getaway, by far the most modern and indulgent hotel in all of Micronesia. Cable TV, jacuzzis

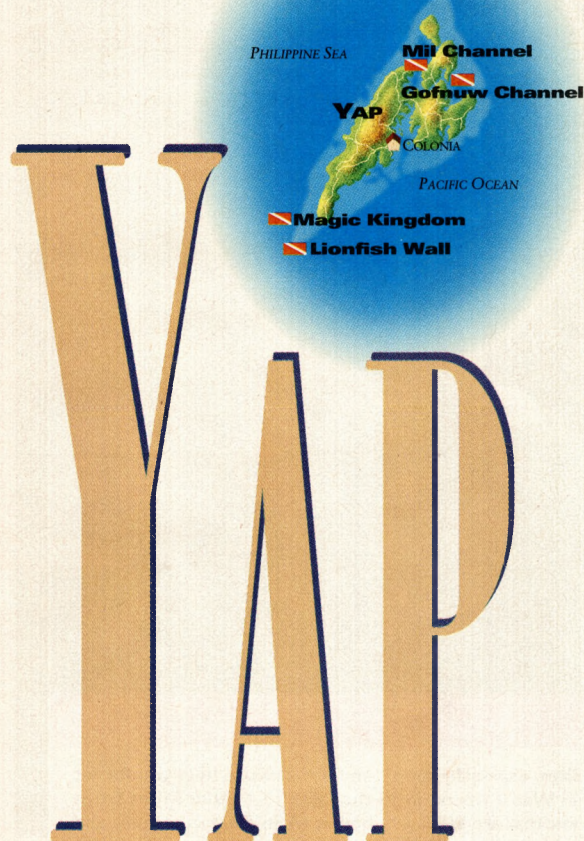
and a masseuse help you forget that you're 10,000 miles from home, while the nature trails and fish pond complete with sharks and rays tell you otherwise. The Hotel Nikko Palau was the top dog before the PPR was built in 1984. It commands an excellent hilltop view of the Rock Islands, but it's now a mildewed icon of the '70s. A 45-minute boat ride from Koror, Carp Island Resort on Ngercheu Island toward the southern end of the archipelago is rustic and peaceful, and close to the major dive sites. Expect to be one of the only Americans staying in the ocean-front cottages, as Japanese divers outnumber Yanks about four to one. No biggie. The Palau Marina Hotel is a diver hot spot next to Fish 'N Fins in Koror.

Diversions



If you're staying at Carp Island, hike across Ngercheu Island to the beach on the other side. Along the way you'll find mangrove swamps, stone money and rolls of rusted barbed wire on the beach. In Koror, visit the Belau National Museum, climb Mount Malakal for a view of the Rock Islands or rent a kayak and paddle them.

SAME AS IT EVER WAS



I FEEL LIKE BEAVIS (SANS BUTTHEAD) AS I CATCH myself staring at the half-dozen bare-breasted women at Yap's international airport. Less than three minutes off the plane, I'm through customs and already knee-deep in a culture that is thousands of miles and a world away from my own—even far from the

hustle and bustle of Koror 250 miles west. If somebody pushed the fast-forward button on Palau's progression, in Yap, they threw on the brakes. Glancing around, I realize I'm the only one staring. Throw conventional wisdom to the wind: showing your thighs in public is taboo in this place where baring your breasts is the norm.

I'm not arguing with this, however. They're merely safeguarding their heritage. Island chiefs have veto power over state laws for cultural matters, something many places need. Land is still passed on from generation to generation, and traded with giant round disks, "stone money" that was brought to Yap on outrigger canoes. Up until a few decades ago, village men would raid neighboring towns, kidnap women for sex, and then return them. Oddly enough, Yap consumes more Budweiser per capita than anywhere else in the world.

Yap proper is made up of four major islands, all but

MANY HAVE SPECULATED WHY YAP'S CLOUDY CHANNELS ARE SO POPULAR AMONG MANTAS AND DIVERS—BUT IT'S EASIER TO JUST GO WITH THE FLOW. YAP'S MEETINGHOUSES (RIGHT) ARE ICONS OF A STILL MALE-DOMINATED CULTURE. STONE MONEY (BOTTOM) IS STILL LEGAL TENDER FOR LAND PURCHASES. THEY JUST DON'T FLIP FOR IT.

one linked by road. Fifteen outer islands orbit Yap, arcing 600 miles eastward between the blue of sea and sky. Despite its vast water area, the state is made up of only about 11 square miles of dry earth. Stone paths criss-cross the landscape. Traditional meeting places, or men's houses, still stand in thatched splendor as they did centuries ago.

Yap islanders were the great voyagers of Micronesia, using outrigger canoes and the stars to reach the far corners of the Pacific. They traveled to Palau for stone money, which earned its value not by size but by the peril of the voyage back to Yap. You'll find stone money all over Yap (and Palau). Avoid walking on it.



TRAVEL SMARTS

Slightly more conservative dress is recommended in Yap than Palau. Women, make sure you cover your knees in public.

Arrange land tours and tickets to local dance performances through your hotel.

Check expiration dates of foodstuffs purchased here. Sometimes stock is not replenished as often as back home.

D. HOLDEN BAILEY

YAP DIVE IN

Diving



For many divers, Yap and mantas are synonymous. The two go together like Truk Lagoon and wrecks, Crystal River and manatees, a horse and carriage. Kneeling on the bottom of Yap's low-vis channels while mantas with up to 16-foot wingspans glide out of the murk and over you (and often bumping into you), is an experience you won't soon forget.

In fact, I had to dive it four times just to make sure. Any one of 45 cataloged mantas could show up any time in Mil Channel between November and May or Gofnuw Channel June through October. It's the trade winds that send the mantas, with names like Jalapeño, Yoko and Stubby, scrambling for cover. Your bub-

with one place may be wise. Yap Divers at the Manta Ray Bay will take you to the mantas in the channels or the southern wall sites. They also invite exploration, offering trips to places even they haven't been to find new sites. Manta Visions, located in the hotel, is a full-service photo and video center. Pathways, Beyond the Reef Charters and Nature's Way dive all the sites, cater to small groups and offer environmentally sensitive dive tours.

Accommodations



Choice of accommodations reflect Yap's reluctance toward progress, as there are only a handful of hotels that cater to divers, all in Colonia. The Manta Ray Bay on the harborfront is the most westernized dive resort on Yap. While there's no beach here—or any nearby for that matter—convenience is key, as the dive boats leave from the dock out front. The Pathways Hotel is a little cheaper, but is landlocked. You can get a thatched hut room with or without air-conditioning. A new kitchen is in the works to provide lunch and dinner. The New Rai View Hotel and ESA Hotel offer small, relatively inexpensive accommodations with bare-bones facilities.

Diversions



It would take some major planning and logistics, but a voyage to the outer islands is possible on the field-trip ship *MV Micro Spirit*, which takes long excursions. Pacific Missionary Aviation also has prop flights to some of these islands, as often as once or twice weekly. Walk the stone paths, but be careful during and after rain as they are extremely slippery. Another good hike is to the hills outside Colonia, near an old Coast Guard lighthouse. You get a breathtaking view of Yap proper, from north to south. Ask a guide to take you to one of the many meetinghouses, which are scattered all across the island. Check out Bechiyal in the north, a cultural complex with meetinghouse, exhibits and handicrafts. Admission is only \$2.50 but expect to pay \$25 just to bring your camera along. It's going toward a good cause—preserving the islands' heritage.

Dive operations

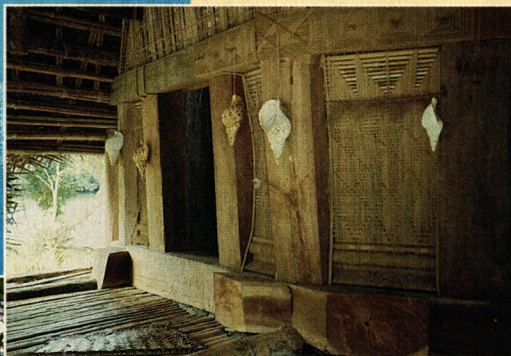


All dive operations accept divers from any resort, although buying a hotel/dive package

bles will spook some and attract others, depending on individual personalities. Keep an eye on your computer, as you'll load up on more nitrogen than you'd expect sitting still at 40 feet.

But Yap is more than just mantas. In fact, the sites along the southern edge of the island's barrier reef are home to some of the best wall diving in the Pacific. Grab the close-focus kit and head for Lionfish Wall. Of course there's lionfish, but you'll also find clouds of anthias, anemones with anemonefish and green bottle-cap-shaped corallimorphs.

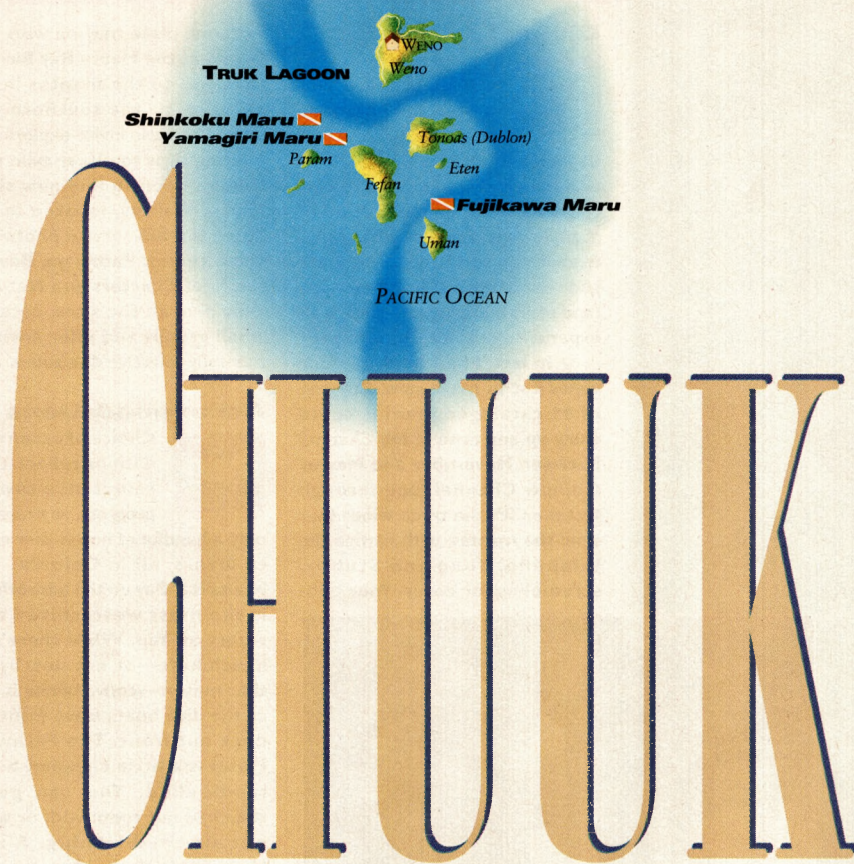
From the ashes of disaster rises an interesting dive site, Magic Kingdom, where heavy wave action from a tropical storm upended coral heads and reduced huge tracts of the reef to rubble. Algae growing on the rubble attracts small fish, which in turn bring in the bigger guys.



NICK LUCEY



AMOS NACHOUM



TROUBLE IN PARADISE

IT WAS EVERY TOURIST'S NIGHTMARE: coming in on the evening flight from Guam, the airplane's wings sliced through horizontal sheets of heavy Pacific rain. On the ground, the airstrip lights were powered by emergency generators, now worth their massive weight in gold. The governor had just been impeached, caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Hotels had power, but the local populace was doing without. Chuuk has always been the black sheep of the Micronesian family, scarred by corruption, poverty and one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

On the flip side, Chuuk has the greatest concentration of diveable shipwrecks on earth, 70 in the lagoon with new ones being discovered all the time. Nutrient-rich waters festoon the steel coffins with a cotton-candy coat of soft corals and anemones, cloaking the Emperor's fleet in a Technicolor haze, with sharks and trevally as deckhands on a voyage to nowhere. This may be their equivalent of Pearl Harbor, but the Japanese were tipped off to the invasion, and moved a majority of their battle craft out in time. Many of the ships you dive in the lagoon were freighters outfitted with guns for the war effort. The Japanese even carved out an island, Eten, into the shape of an aircraft carrier to fool the Yankee flyboys. All in vain.

If it weren't for divers, Chuuk would remain a mystery, exotic as Timbuktu. Despite having the largest population of all the FSM states, Chuuk is the least explored. Besides the Mormon missionaries in ties and boots, every John and Mary coming off the plane is here for one reason and one reason alone: to dive the greatest wrecks on earth.

Someday, Chuuk will be a circular atoll, but for now, 11 peaks jut from the lagoon and an additional 14 atolls lie outside the 140-mile-long barrier reef—290 islands in all. While the isles outside the reef are just sand and palms, those in the lagoon are lush and green. Weno is the capital and has the largest population.

RICK HEYDEL



TRAVEL SMARTS

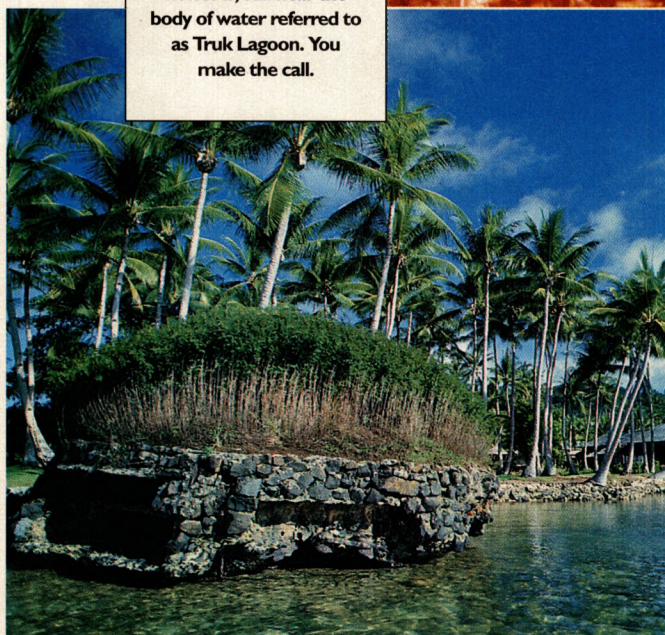
Consider bringing a small, portable water purifier to Chuuk, as the water quality is questionable. There are models now that are actually a self-purifying cup, easily stashed in a carry-on.

Although the official requirement is just proof of citizenship, I met people who were detained from leaving the islands for a day because they didn't have their passports with them.

You must pay a \$10 departure tax at the airport when leaving Chuuk.

Although this collection of islands has been known as Truk for decades, the politically correct name is Chuuk (*chewk*). You will, however, still hear the body of water referred to as Truk Lagoon. You make the call.

M. TIMOTHY O'KEEFE



CHUUK DIVE IN

Diving



The 435-foot *Fujikawa Maru* rests upright on the lagoon's sandy bottom in 110 feet of water, its rear mast poking out from the surface. It's a beautiful wreck, adorned with soft corals in warm shades of pink, purple, white, red and yellow. The bow and stern guns are fully intact, and the holds contain spent shells, machine guns and a Zero fuselage. Bring the macro lens for the anemones and cleaner shrimp. For a surface interval and snorkel, have your guide take you to the Japanese fighter that lies upside down in 20 feet of water just north of Eten.

The 500-foot fleet oiler *Shinkoku Maru* is a treasure trove of artifacts including telephones, bottles, first-aid kits and barrels. The ship's dispensary appears frozen in time, with a number of artifacts resting on the operating table. Add huge stalks of soft coral and cruising tuna, trevally and sharks, and this wreck is all of Chuuk in one package. You'll understand why the *Fujikawa* and *Shinkoku* are two of Chuuk's most popular night dives.

The 430-foot *Yamagiri Maru* lies on her side in 50 to 110 feet of water. Cargo hold No. 5 at 80 to 100 feet harbors a stockpile of 18-inch shells, which the ship hauled for a destroyer. The rudder and giant screw are intact although completely encrusted in soft coral and sponge growth. Discovered in 1970, it was the first of many wrecks found by Kimiyo Aisek, owner of the Blue Lagoon Dive Shop.

Chuuk was named best destination for wreck diving in the world ("Readers' Choice Top 100," RSD, February '96) with a perfect score of 5.00.

Dive operations



Your choice of dive operations is limited to three. Blue Lagoon Dive Shop is the biggest, oldest and most established. It offers trips to any of the diveable lagoon wrecks and barrier reef sites. Sundance Tours & Dive Shop owns five boats, including Chuuk's most modern, a Pro 42. Micronesia Aquatics offers tours with an emphasis on environmental protection and historic preservation.

Your best alternative to land-based accommodations and diving is a live-aboard, either the *SS Thorfinn*, a 170-foot craft with 11 staterooms, or the 117-foot *Truk Aggressor II*, which accommodates 14 divers max. You can even stay a night or two in a hotel before the trip, giving you the best of both worlds while allowing you to soak up some of the local color. You'll want to dive with a buddy, but make your dive computer your soul mate, being careful on repetitive dives. The square dive profiles that these wrecks require have sent many people back to Guam for a dip in the recompression chamber.

Accommodations

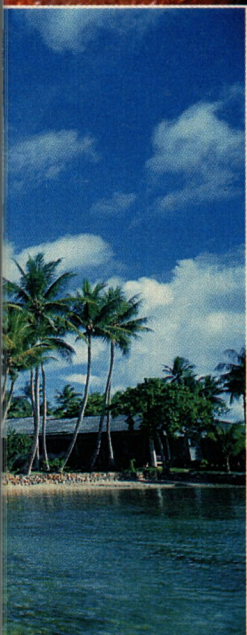


All hotels are on the main island of Weno, but the tourism office will give you a list of families willing to put travelers up on the smaller islands. While there are smaller and cheaper hotels, only two are recommended for reasons you'll understand when you get there. The Truk Stop is modern, clean and comfortable and has a good restaurant with a great view of the water. Safe and close to the airport, it is, however, a little noisier due to its downtown location. The Truk Continental at the island's southern end is Chuuk's granddaddy, and its age is starting to show. Convenience, however, is the name of the game at the Continental, as all the dive operations use the hotel's docks on the southern tip to depart for the wrecks, and the beach here is one of the best you're gonna get on Weno.

Diversions

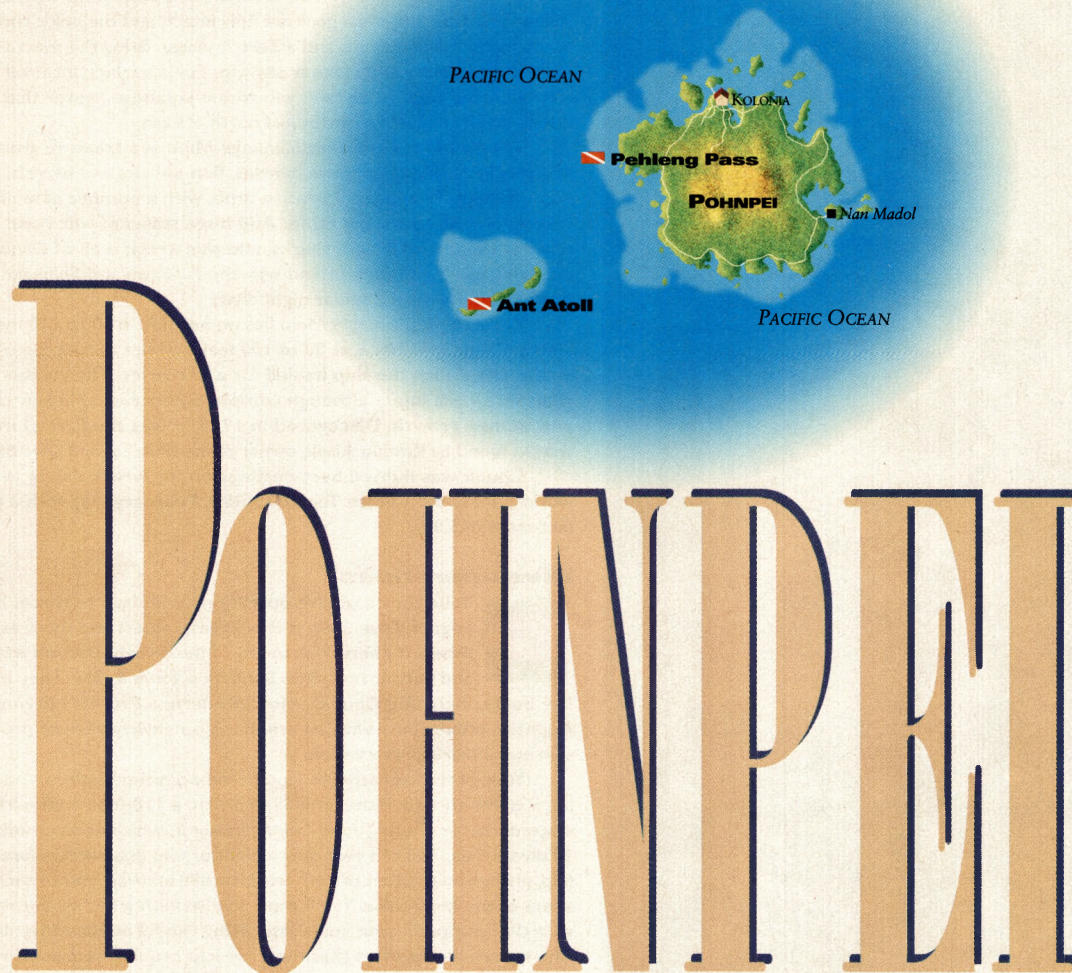


Break the routine and do more than diving. Ask your hotel manager for a reputable guide. Mine was Koichy Peset, night watchman at the Truk Stop and former cop. For about 50 bucks, Peset will take you to the island of Tonoas (also called Dublon), former home of the major Japanese naval installation and hospital. You can tour bombed-out reinforced bunkers on Eten, now leaky and inhabited by locals who will let you in for a small donation. Browse for handicrafts on Fefan or hike around Tol, Chuuk's largest and highest island. Whatever you do, get out of Weno for a day.



LUSH SOFT CORALS ADORN CHUUK'S WRECKS LIKE FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS ON A GRAVE. THESE SACRED, SUNKEN COFFINS MAKE UP THE GREATEST CONCENTRATION OF DIVEABLE WRECKS ON THE PLANET. MOTHER NATURE CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT MAN TRIES TO FORGET: A JAPANESE MACHINE GUN NEST IS NOW COVERED IN WEEDS (INSET).

MICRONESIA'S FEMININE SIDE



IF CHUUK IS MASCULINE, WITH ITS TWISTED METAL wrecks, war relics and disorder, Pohnpei is feminine: lush, fertile, nurturing, romantic. Waterfalls spout geyser-like from the landscape, peaks jut from the horizon at erotic angles, and delicate, constant rains rejuvenate flora and fauna like a perpetual spring.

Japanese divers have kept it a secret for a while, but Americans are catching on. Two-hundred-square-mile Pohnpei is the capital and largest island in the Federated States. From the air, the island looks like a giant paint splotch; its highest point in the interior, Nahnalaud, towers 2,300 feet above the Pacific, and peninsulas extend from its center. Kolonia and its 10,000 people are nestled around a natural harbor in the north. Beyond the protective barrier reef, eight outlying atolls like Ant and Pakin are idyllic sandy spits, some of the finest beaches in all of Micronesia. While in Pohnpei, don't forget to pick up white or black pepper, renowned by gourmands as some of the finest in the world.

NICK LUCEY



TRAVEL SMARTS

Many popular tourist sites throughout Micronesia, including **Nan Madol** and some of the waterfalls on Pohnpei, are located on private property. Have a guide take you there and negotiate a small contribution to the landowner.

Pohnpei charges a \$5 departure tax.

Attention party animals: Beware of **sakau**, a drink derived from a pepper shrub root and similar to Fiji's kava. The mild narcotic effect you get from it is a far cry from drinking Old Milwaukee Light.

If you plan on touring the island by rental car, consider a pick-up truck. These are available from the airport for \$50 a day or can be delivered to your hotel.





POHNPEI'S JAGGED PEAKS CATCH PASSING MOISTURE, CREATING SOME OF THE WORLD'S WETTEST WEATHER AND MOST BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS. A WALL MURAL (OPPOSITE PAGE) DEPICTS THE CONSTRUCTION OF NAN MADOL, POHNPEI'S FEUDAL CITY BUILT BETWEEN 1285 AND 1485, NOW IN RUINS BUT SNORKELABLE.

POHNPEI DIVE IN

Diving

 Runoff from Pohnpei's 42 rivers and streams tends to muddy the lagoon that rings the island. Most sites are on the outer edge of the barrier reef. My favorite was Pehleing Pass on the west side, reminiscent of Palau's Blue Corner. It's that feeling that anything can show up at anytime. For me, it was gray reef sharks, grouper, tuna, turtles and a sky's-worth of starfish. Expect vis in the triple digits on this wall.

Well worth the hour-long, open-ocean boat ride is Ant Atoll just west of the big island and outside the barrier reef. When the tide's coming in at Step Pas-

sage, you can drop down and glide into the lagoon in a two-knot breeze. The ride takes you past some of the largest orange elephant ear sponges this side of the Caymans. Lionfish, something you won't see in the Caribbean, hide in pockmarks on the wall face. Keep an eye on the gauges, as you'll sometimes experience slight up and down currents here.

Dive operations



Take your pick from three. Village Tours and Dive Service is located at the Village Resort and offers hotel/dive packages with meals included. Let Ehu/Dive Pohnpei offers dives with mantas and sharks, and the

Phoenix Marine Sports Club visits sites around Pohnpei and outlying Pakin and Ant Atolls.

Accommodations



If you're looking for a typical dive resort, you have fewer choices here than at a Russian grocery store. Although there are several budget motels and places frequented by businessmen in and around Kolonia, only a couple are popular with Americans. The Village Hotel is Pohnpei's most famous and intimate spot. According to owners Patti and Robert Arthur, the hotel won the world's first ecotourism award in 1991. If you are traveling as a couple, look no further. Handcrafted by locals from local

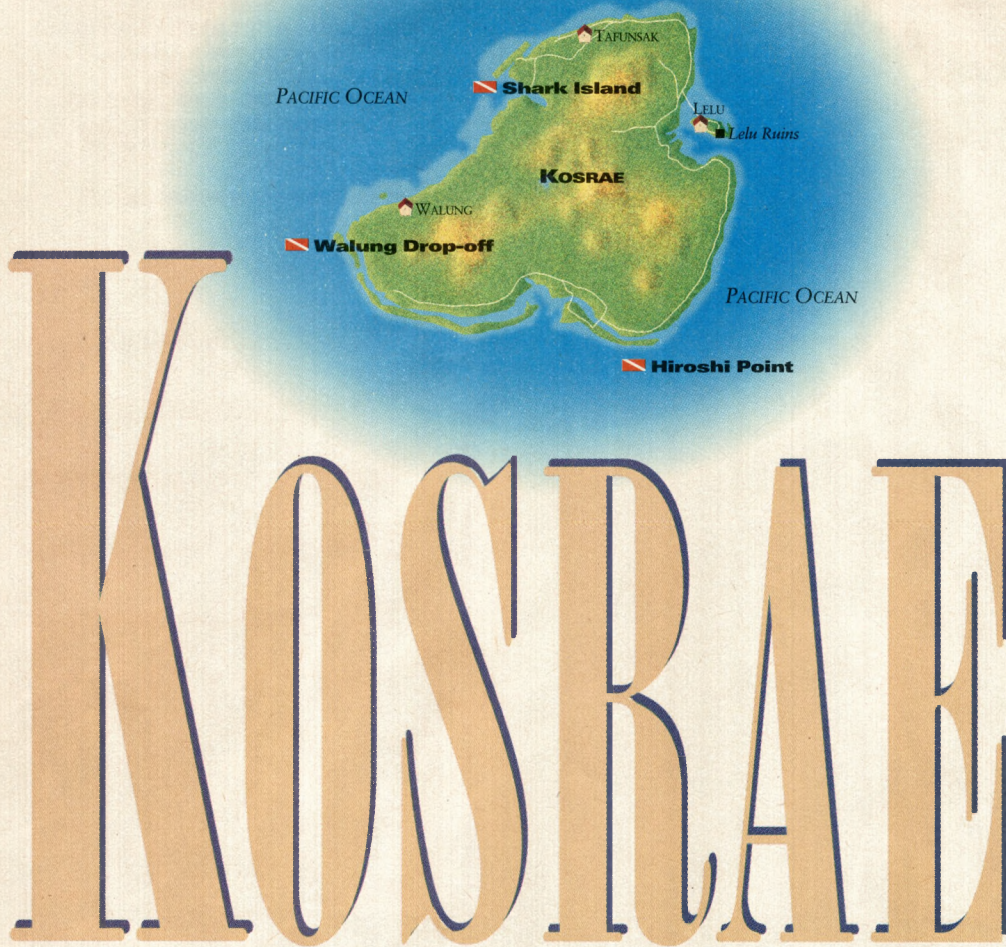
materials, each hut overlooks the lagoon and has a waterbed.

Diversions



Built between the late 1200s and 1400s, Nan Madol is without a doubt one of the most impressive ruins in all the Pacific. The 92 artificial islands that make up the ruins are crafted from enormous basalt logs, brought in by bamboo raft. The entire complex covers 200 acres and was built on a reef the Pohnpeians called Sounahleng, or "reef of heaven." Your hotel can arrange snorkel tours of Nan Madol. It's cliché but true: No trip to Pohnpei is complete without a visit. Frolic in one of Pohnpei's waterfalls. Liduduhniap, due south of Kolonia, has picnic tables and a well-marked trail.

ERIC HANAUER



HOW DO YOU SAY THAT AGAIN?

A MONTH BEFORE MY TRIP, I HAD NEVER HEARD OF THIS PLACE, let alone know how to pronounce it (I pronounced it *kawsh-rye* and wasn't corrected, but you'll hear it spoken many different ways while you're there). In a way, I wish I never had heard of it. Don't get me wrong—this is one of the most beautiful places on earth and the locals welcome you like long-lost cousins. It's just that this is one of those islands that you want to lock up and keep for yourself, a place that you think about and smile like it's some kind of inside joke. It's somewhere you truly must see now—not just recreationally, but culturally, spiritually and environmentally.

The triangular isle is easternmost and second largest in the FSM. It is shaped much like Pohnpei in the middle with lush jagged peaks, capped by Mount Finkol 2,000 feet above the sea. The coast, however, boasts fine beaches and no barrier reef. Don't fret, though, as Kosrae is outside the typhoon belt.

Kosrae is probably the most devout and conservative island in the western Pacific—95 percent of the population is Congregational. There are no outer islands in the state, so the culture is concentrated in one 70-square-mile dollop of lush earth. Kosrae's equivalent of the outer island is Walung, a tiny hamlet on its western fringe that's still untethered by road from the rest of the island. The island was a popular stopover for New England whalers in the early 1800s, who managed to wipe out most of the population (and whales) with imported diseases.

MIKE SEVERNS, ERIC HANAUER



TRAVEL SMARTS

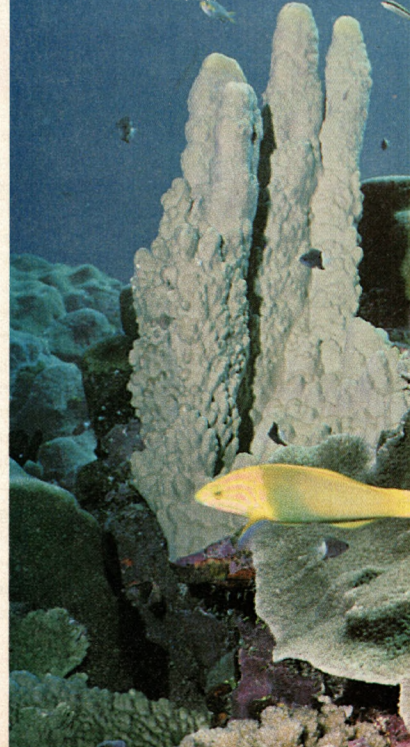
While Kosrae's Lelu Ruins doesn't charge an entry fee per se, they will ask for a "contribution." \$3 to \$5 is the going rate.

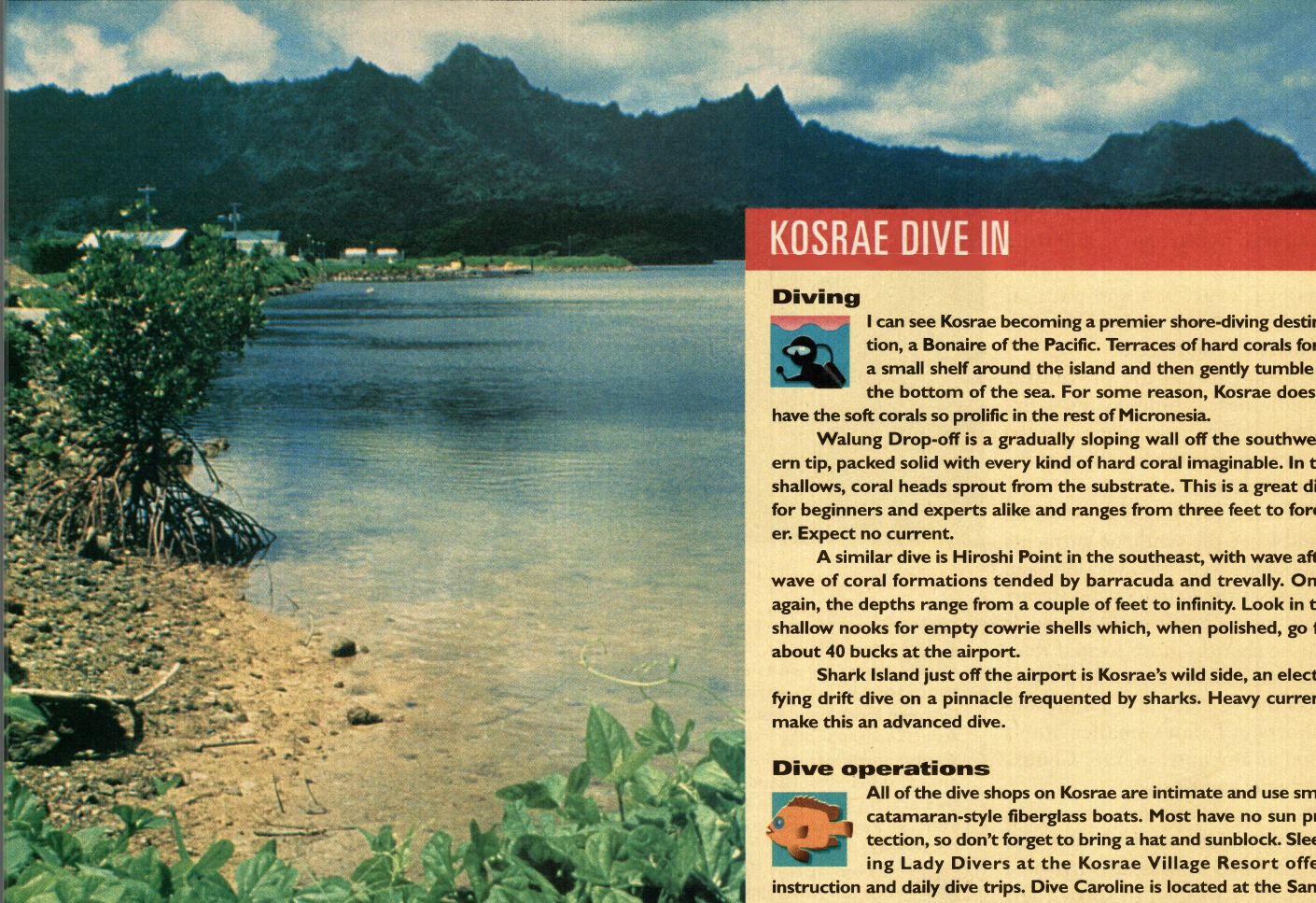
You'll need a permit to drink alcoholic beverages on Kosrae. Permits cost \$3 and are available from your hotel bar.

Remember that the island completely shuts down on Sunday. Don't fight the dive operators for not diving on these days. They are under a lot of pressure from local government to maintain cultural harmony.



KOSRAE'S SHARP SKYLINE IS MORE REMINISCENT OF POLYNESIA THAN YAP OR PALAU. EASTERNMOST IN THE FEDERATED STATES, THE ISLAND IS MICRONESIA'S BACKWATER—LEAST POPULATED, STAUNCHLY CONSERVATIVE, MOST REMOTE. WHILE LACKING MICRONESIA'S TRADEMARK SOFT CORALS, KOSRAE BOASTS A WHO'S WHO OF HARD SPECIES.





KOSRAE DIVE IN

Diving



I can see Kosrae becoming a premier shore-diving destination, a Bonaire of the Pacific. Terraces of hard corals form a small shelf around the island and then gently tumble to the bottom of the sea. For some reason, Kosrae doesn't have the soft corals so prolific in the rest of Micronesia.

Walung Drop-off is a gradually sloping wall off the southwestern tip, packed solid with every kind of hard coral imaginable. In the shallows, coral heads sprout from the substrate. This is a great dive for beginners and experts alike and ranges from three feet to forever. Expect no current.

A similar dive is Hiroshi Point in the southeast, with wave after wave of coral formations tended by barracuda and trevally. Once again, the depths range from a couple of feet to infinity. Look in the shallow nooks for empty cowrie shells which, when polished, go for about 40 bucks at the airport.

Shark Island just off the airport is Kosrae's wild side, an electrifying drift dive on a pinnacle frequented by sharks. Heavy currents make this an advanced dive.

Dive operations



All of the dive shops on Kosrae are intimate and use small catamaran-style fiberglass boats. Most have no sun protection, so don't forget to bring a hat and sunblock. Sleeping Lady Divers at the Kosrae Village Resort offers instruction and daily dive trips. Dive Caroline is located at the Sandy Beach Hotel and offers wall and wreck diving. Phoenix Marine Sports Club, popular with Japanese divers, also has a shop on Kosrae and offers a wide array of dive packages. Kosrae Nautilus Resort has a dive shop, which caters to small groups.

Accommodations

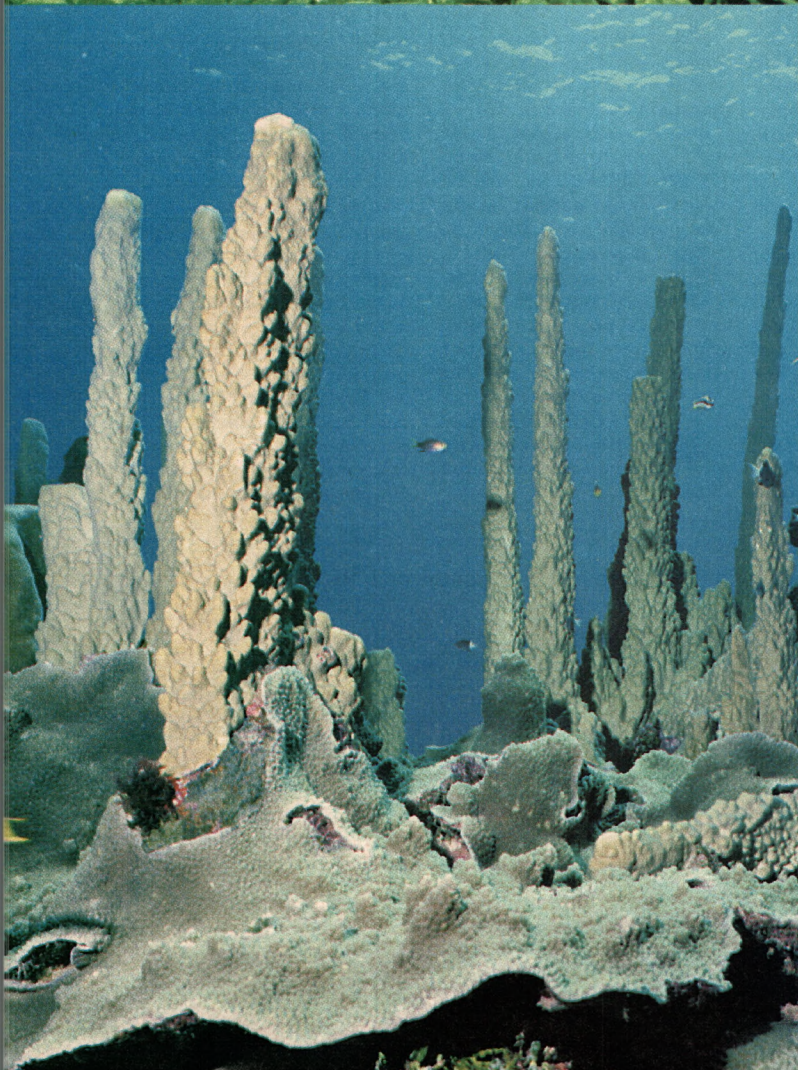


Oddly enough, you have more choices for accommodations per capita on this lightly populated island than probably anywhere else in Micronesia. The Kosrae Village is the island's newest. In fact, one night I was there, I was the only guest staying in any of the three existing bungalows. Nine more are planned, and all are wheelchair-accessible, an oddity in this part of the world. The Village's restaurant, The Inum, is the best on the island, with fresh-baked breads, sashimi daily and its signature drink, lime juice, picked right off the trees. Sandy Beach Hotel in Tafunsak is one of the oldest on Kosrae and has a great location on the beach. The Kosrae Nautilus Resort is a modern Australian-owned establishment that's so clean your mother would approve.

Diversions



Kosrae's version of Nan Madol is Lelu Ruins, a slightly smaller and drier compound than its Pohnpei cousin 300 miles to the west and north. It's also more accessible, though the land it sits on is privately owned, so expect an entry fee. When driving across the causeway from Lelu Island to the mainland, look west across the harbor to see the Sleeping Lady, a female figure formed by the mountainscape. Her head and breasts are perfectly clear, but the rest is a little distorted. There's a bird cave full of swifts at a quarry off the road on the way to the airport. A Japanese pillbox and bunker lie on the beach near Malem. Like Pohnpei, Kosrae is blessed with several waterfalls which are a great way to cool down at the end of a hot day, including Yekala in the north and Sipyen in the south. Everything is closed on Sundays and liquor is unavailable, a perfect opportunity to visit the local churches where choirs sing in four-part harmony. In fact, diving is frowned upon on the Sabbath, so plan accordingly.



(Continued from page 30) when you get halfway around the world. Here are some considerations when packing for Micronesia.

► From the pile of clothes that you plan to take, put half of them back in your closet. Then, take half of what's left and put that back too. Now pack what's left. This is all you'll need.

► Don't forget the preventive medicines: sunblock, lip balm, Imodium and pain reliever for the morning after the late night at the local *sakau* bar.

► Pack a lot of cotton clothing, and leave the synthetic garments at home except for a windbreaker. Dress at the Palau Pacific Resort and tourist hotels on Guam tends to be slightly more formal than the rest of Micronesia. You won't feel out of place in a T-shirt and shorts in Palau's smaller hotels and at any hotel in Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae.

► Although you may see women in Yap and the outer islands walking around topless, it is frowned upon for women to show their thighs in public. Anything goes, however, poolside, beachside and on the dive boat. Longer shorts are advisable for both men and women.

► Bring all the film you'll need. For serious shutterbugs, two or three rolls a day are recommended. Color slide and black-and-white film are especially rare, expensive and usually past the expiration date.

► Visa and American Express are widely accepted throughout the islands' major resorts and their restaurants. Don't expect smaller hotels and restaurants not located in a resort to take plastic. Guam is your last chance to hit an automated teller machine.

Infomania

A trip to Micronesia requires a little more logistical planning than say, a trip to Grandma's in Duluth. When you look for books in your local B. Dalton's, you'll start to wonder if this part of the world actually exists. Log on, tune in or read up to make your experience a better one. The more questions you have to ask when you get there, the less time you have to dive.

► **Moon Publications'** *Micronesia Handbook* is about the most complete travel

guide to these islands. Consider it top-priority gear along with your mask, fins and Imodium. You can order it by calling (800) 345-5473 or (916) 345-5473. **Lonely Planet** also puts out a very thorough guide to the region.

► **Gulf Publishing Company** and its series of Pisces Books, very popular among divers, has titles including *Palau, Truk Lagoon* and a combined *Guam and Yap*. These books will be your surrogate dive guides. You can also order these over the phone by calling (800) 231-6275, ext. 300 or (713) 529-4301, ext. 300.

► **Continental Micronesia**, the only airline that connects all these islands, can provide a wealth of information on the region. Order a 16-page brochure by calling (800) 945-9955. You can also access data on the islands on their World Wide Web site, <http://www.destmic.com>. Reservations can be reached at (800) 231-0856. ► Dive travel specialists, along with being able to create an itinerary for you, will be happy to send you more information on the region. ☺

Nick Lucey is an RSD associate editor.

Micronesia Dive in



Location ► Micronesia (literally, "small islands") consists of thousands of isles sprinkled between Hawaii and Southeast Asia. Geographically, Micronesia also encompasses the Marianas and Marshall Islands, but this article focuses on Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia.



Geography ► Islands take on many different forms here, from Guam and Palau, which are the exposed peaks of an undersea ridge, to Yap, a raised section of the Philippine Plate, to volcanic Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae. Of these, a mere 125 are inhabited; the rest are sand and palm specks in the infinitely huge Pacific.



Politics ► Palau, or the Republic of Belau, is one of the world's newest nations, becoming independent from the United States in October 1994. The Federated States of Micronesia are comprised of four states from west to east: Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae. While technically independent, it

enjoys a Compact of Free Association with the United States, which has overseen these islands since World War II.



Climate ► The climate is defined by heavy rains, which as a rule decrease when you travel westward from Kosrae to Palau. Proximity to the equator ensures steady temps year-round, in the 80Fs and 90Fs during the day, and 70Fs at night. On average, Micronesia spawns 19 typhoons a year, most moving northwest toward Guam and the Japanese archipelago.



Language ► Know English? Good, so do most Micronesians. Be a little more patient on the smaller and outer islands.



Currency ► The U.S. dollar is used throughout Palau and Micronesia.



Documents ► You'll need a passport, but you won't need a visa for stays up to 30 days.



Electricity ► 110 volts, 60 cycles; the same as in the United States.



Water conditions ► A constant 80F year-round. Expect visibility from 75 to 150 feet, depending on the season; it peaks in December through March, the driest months.



Getting there ► Unless you're swimming, sailing your own boat or hitchhiking on an oceangoing freighter, you've gotta fly Continental Micronesia to get to Palau and Micronesia. All flights depart from Honolulu, and you can either catch the nonstop to Guam or the island-hopper by way of Johnston Atoll, Kwajalein and Majuro in the Marshall Islands, to Kosrae. If you have the time, take the long way.



Just in case ► There is a recompression chamber on Palau at the Belau National Hospital in Koror. There is also one on Guam, the SRF Guam Recompression Chamber located at the naval station. There is a chamber on Chuuk but as of press time, no one to operate it, so your only option is the 600-plus-mile flight to Guam.

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RICK HEYDEL

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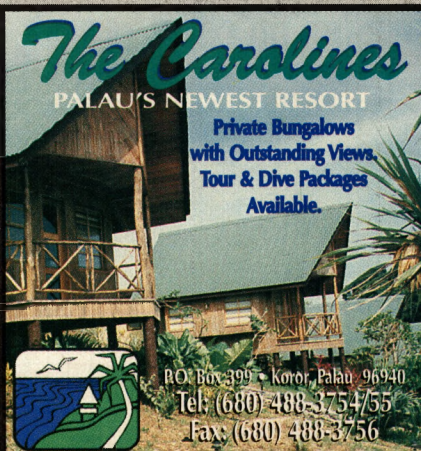
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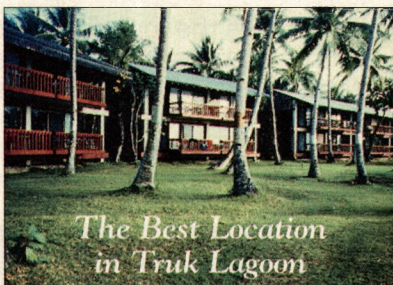


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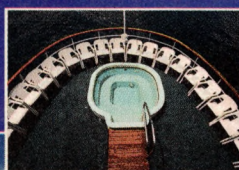
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Micronesian immersion:

(noun)

1. the act of plunging into Micronesia's pristine waters where the action is electric, the wild life remains wild, wrecked ships become grand reefs and tiny organisms create unimaginable colors.
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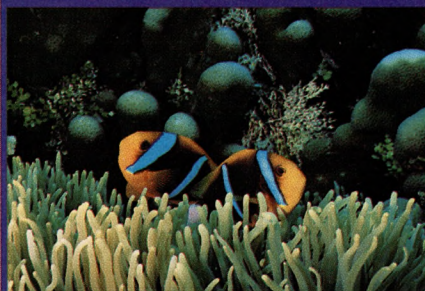
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We were still in the lee of Wolf Island, cruising to nearby Darwin, when the first wahoo hit. There was a cry from one of the crew on the aft platform, and through the saloon windows we could see the big fish flash far back in the wake. By the time it was yanked, shimmering, aboard—a blue-striped speedster with good bold eyes and a stout beak full of teeth—we had gathered on the aft deck with our coffees and teas to watch the action.

by Bucky McMahon

Game fishing is exciting. Really good game fishing, in my experience, is the exception to endless uneventful trolling in the tired Atlantic off Florida. But we'd just been diving under these pristine waters in the far northwestern corner of the Galapagos archipelago, and we knew the fish were there. They were there, buddy, like I'd never seen before. Coming around the point of the islet at Wolf at 60 feet, hand-over-hand, horizontal mountain climbing against a bulling current. It was like seeing a sunken New York City sidewalk scene, an urban density of fish, pelagic fish the size of people, glowering like big-city grumps.

In a trice, a crewman was pumping elbows, hauling in another. Again, a no-nonsense handline landing. Quickly over the transom, the 40-pound wahoo took three blows to the brain from a claw hammer, and then was plunked head down into a plastic barrel to twitch out its

last with the other fish.

One guest retired to the saloon; it's unpleasant seeing anything cudgeled. But the rest of us were at the rail, mesmerized ichthyophiles. As soon as the line played out, a third wahoo hit the lure. This was some kind of good fishing.

Paradise Lost

That was when I began to wonder about this kind of fishing. In a national park, a World Heritage Site? It couldn't be right, I thought; it couldn't even be legal.

As I learned later from the Charles Darwin Foundation, it isn't. Stiff penalties—including fines, imprisonment and suspension of permit—back up the law.

And then I was told by the Galapagos tour operators organization, ASOGAL, that the National Park authorizes catching fish for consumption aboard tourist yachts. A third source, Conservation Network International, said, No, the practice had been illegal for a year now. A

GALAPAGA

fourth source said, Hmm ... maybe the law had changed again.

At any rate, no offense has ever been prosecuted and the practice of fishing from tourist boats is said to be well-nigh universal. On this live-aboard dive boat, there was always a rod and reel propped up against the compressor; two cave-diving reels rigged for bottom fishing hung in plain sight; most of the crew had their own handlines; plus this clothesline-thick heavy-duty trolling rig. There'd been no pretense of secrecy.

Obviously, in the current climate, legal and moral, fishing was irresistible, like pilfering from a rich till that no one ever watches, and whose rightful ownership is under constant debate.

Our first naturalist-guide (he'd left after a week for personal business) had been a young Englishman, smitten by the Galapagos, but obviously troubled by his experiences here. "It's becoming a tragic place," he'd told me. "Paradise is being lost." He recalled a previous trip when there had been a writer onboard, and they encountered a fishing boat illegally taking shark for the Asian shark-fin soup market. The writer took notes, but all mention of the event was whitewashed out of the published story. It was all good news as usual from the fabulous Galapagos. I promised I'd write whatever I saw.

Now the marine reserve was missing several of its leading citizens, and I was witness to business as usual in some of the richest waters on the planet. The crew called it quits after sliding a fourth wahoo into the barrel, bringing the take up to about 200 pounds, before cleaning.

"That's a lot of fish, isn't it?" I

asked our new naturalist-guide, a 20-something Ecuadoran.

Quietly, and to be sure—caught as he was between the interests of fish-loving divers and the fish-catching crew—more than a little uneasily, the guide answered: "No, here there are thousands and thousands of fish."

Tourism: A Beacon of Hope

It's true. I've been chasing fish since I was a young boy, and here they are: Some 300 species of fish—including 50 species found nowhere else on earth. Big fish—the kind people like to eat first—still school in prehuman profusion, enjoying an ideal habitat at the crossroads of seven major oceanic currents, and as far away from most of us as possible. The nearest land is the coast of Ecuador, 600 miles to the east. Many of these fish were apex predators until yesterday, so they strut and posture for you, totally unconcerned, wherever there are large stones and strong currents, which are around every Galapagos island.

Today, the birthplace of the theory of evolution is visited by some 60,000 pilgrims a year—among them about 1,500 divers—served by more than 100 tourist boats. Increasingly, the still-evolving tourist industry appears as a beacon of hope for Ecuadorans seeking a better life in the Galapagos Islands. Too often, instead of good-paying jobs, the immigrants find unemployment and a cost of living twice as high as on the mainland. And so they adapt to survive, usually through harvesting the marine resources which make the Galapagos



GONE?

One of the world's sacred places is under unholy attack from two of the usual suspects—greed and ignorance.

an unequaled Mecca for sport divers. This conflict of interests is at the heart of the challenge of saving the Galapagos.

Under Cover Of Night

After the wahoo incident, I kept an eye on the fish barrel, tallying up another couple hundred pounds of bacalao, very roughly estimated, plus a single camotillo, the pretty yellow, white-spotted Galapagos sea bass, an endemic, and the only one I saw in two weeks. That was pretty depressing.

I maintained my vigilance throughout the mysterious goings-on of the final night of our two-week cruise, when we anchored on the deserted western shore of Santa Cruz Island (instead of motoring around to the harbor at Academy Bay), and following much talk by cell phone and waving of flashlights, took on supplies in the dark, and off-loaded ... what? The fish? I'm still not sure.

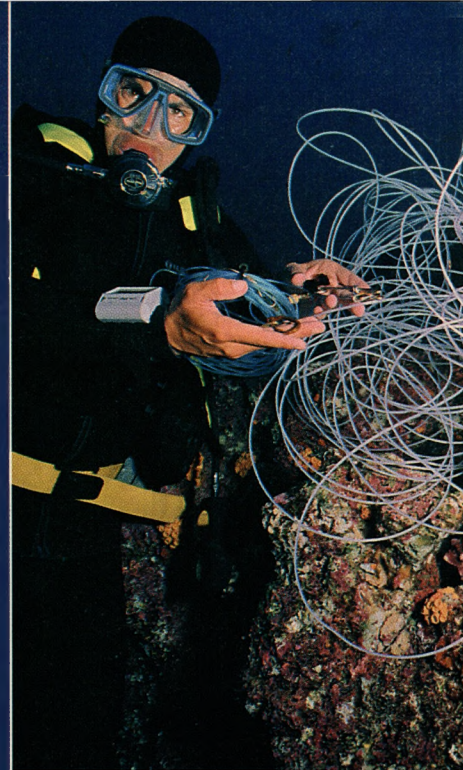
Otherwise, I saw only what a tourist is supposed to see: The well-ordered terrestrial park with its neatly delineated trails, the rambunctious sea lions that joined in on nearly every dive, the blue-footed boobies that walk across your feet, the squalid heaps of marine iguanas that sneeze salt from their noses, wavy albatross couples clacking bills.

And thousands and thousands of fish. Great gray armies of scalloped hammerheads cruised close enough for us to see the love bites behind the females' gill-slits, and the tight-packed muscles flexing under their skin as they tailed against the current. Jacks and snapper and sea bass tame as dogs approached to eyeball us. Fakirs' baskets of fine-spotted morays spilled out of every crevasse, jawing. We saw rays and more rays and manta rays and pods of curious bottlenose and dusky dolphin and fin whales. The best true adventure dives of my life, in that nutrient-rich, amber-lit, Pre-Raphaelite gloom of the Galapagos. And always in stunning settings, under hundred-story cliffs loosing clouds of wheeling seabirds.

A World Heritage Site Under Siege



ABOVE: CATCH-AND-RELEASE SPORTFISHING IS NOW LEGAL IN THE GALAPAGOS, BUT THE INDUSTRY IS LARGELY SELF-MONITORING, AND SOURCES SAY BILLFISH HAVE BEGUN TO SHOW UP ON THE MARKET. RIGHT: A LARGE FISH-PROCESSING PLANT BUILT ON SAN CRISTOBAL IN 1994 BODES ILL FOR GALAPAGOS MARINE LIFE.



The boat was luxurious, the food imaginative, the captain dead-on every anchorage, the guide smart and knowledgeable, the panga driver a wizard, the crew always competent and cordial, if not always entirely in sync with the best long-term interests of the Park, or square with the authorities, if such people truly exist in the Galapagos.

Maybe I should have hung out at the docks, asking questions about the real fishermen. But then "they" might be saying, "He sleeps with the fishes." I tell you, there's some heavy shit going down in the Galapagos. With hundreds of millions of dollars at stake, and a standing work force of the unemployed—vocal, volatile and angry—intimidation tactics by the industrial fisheries (sometimes characterized as "Mafia-esque") have silenced all but a few courageous, and anonymous, local sources. People who know too much are afraid.

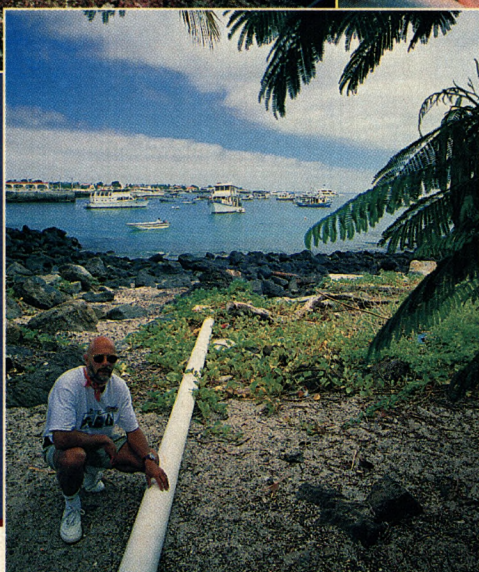
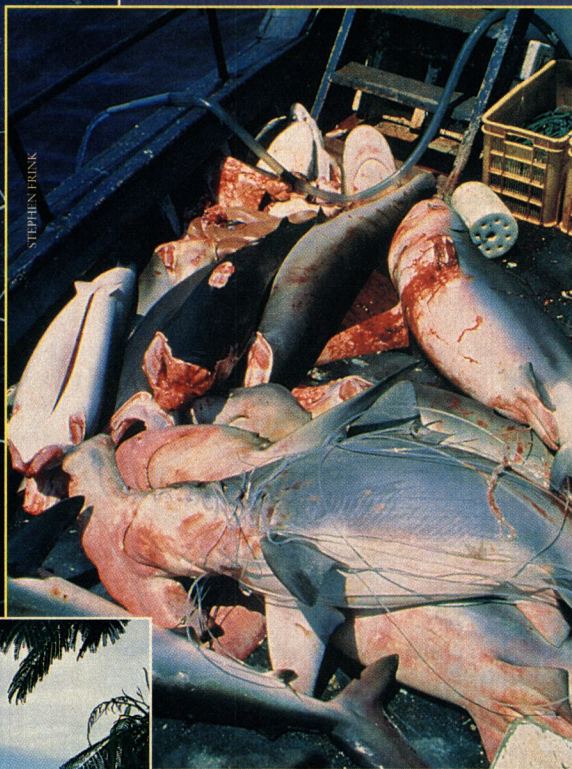
The Bad News

As soon as I got back home, I talked to the conservation groups spearheading efforts to protect the Galapagos to try to find out how much I hadn't seen. The bad news was staggering. A partial list:

► Industrial fishing has recently increased. According to an August 1995 report by Merry Camhi of the National Audubon Society, published in *Conservation Biology*, "Up to 80 major fishing vessels from Japan, Taiwan and Korea, licensed to fish for tuna, are illegally long-lining for sharks and trading in other marine species within the Reserve."

► Shark density is now 50 percent of what it was 10 years ago, and continues to decline. Fishermen have taken tens of thousands of sharks for the shark-fin soup market, sometimes using Galapagos sea lions as bait.

► Sea cucumber fishing, officially prohibited, continues unabated, and they are



CENTER: UNDER WATER, DIVERS IN THE GALAPAGOS MAY FIND EVIDENCE OF ILLEGAL FISHING THAT REMAINS INVISIBLE TO TERRESTRIAL VISITORS. ABOVE: BECAUSE OF LONGLINE FISHING, SHARK DENSITY IN THE GALAPAGOS IS NOW 50 PERCENT OF WHAT IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO,

AND CONTINUES TO DECLINE. LEFT: ILLEGAL FISHING IS NOT THE ONLY PROBLEM FACING THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT IN THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS. OTHER PROBLEMS INCLUDE INADEQUATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL. THIS PIPE CARRIES WASTE DIRECTLY TO THE OCEAN.

rapidly being fished out. In some areas, sea cucumbers are not coming back.

► A seven-year moratorium on lobstering was lifted in its third year. In nearly 40 dives throughout the archipelago, including a night dive, I counted three lobsters.

► Grouper are declining.

► Seahorses, pipefish and sea urchins are being sold to Asian medicinal and aphrodisiac markets.

► Several sea lions are rumored to have been found with their penises cut off—also for the aphrodisiac market.

► 80 giant tortoise deaths were confirmed on Isabela alone in 1994, victims of the violent protest launched by sea cucumber fishermen who took over the Research Station and National Park headquarters in response to the government shutdown of the fishery. Some tortoises were eaten, but others were mutilated and hung in trees, a grisly rebuke to the spirit

of the Park.

► Sportfishing (catch and release) is now legal in the Marine Reserve.

► A “scientific spearfishing study” under the direction of the National Fisheries Institute took place during two weeks in late April and early May of 1996. The targeted sites were in the remote northern islands of Wolf and Darwin, where the curious snapper and sea bass have the habit of swimming within a few feet of divers to exchange lingering looks of amazement. Among the results of the study: feasibility researchers bagged 10,000 pounds of fish (after cleaning) valued at \$14,000.

► A large fish-processing plant was built in 1994 on San Cristobal. Bidding has begun on the construction of a new plant on Isabela to prepare and ship pelagic fish (tuna, shark, etc.). The new plant appears to be a package deal; the bidding companies plan to bring in 30 high-speed boats, and to help local fishermen acquire

financing to purchase them. Sweetening the pot further is the proposal to elevate the airport on Isabela to international status to service world fisheries markets.

► Population of the Galapagos Islands has reached 16,000, increasing at a rate of 8 percent per annum. About 1,000 persons are fishing illegally, according to Johanna Barry, director of the Charles Darwin Foundation, environmental consultants to the park and the Ecuadoran government. The population increase is linked to the decline of Ecuador’s coastal fisheries, though both the tourism industry and the get-rich-quick Asian markets are drawing unemployed people to the islands. The only restriction on immigration from the mainland is a five-year residency requirement before the granting of a work permit. Designed as a filter to manage immigration, the law functions as a model of corruption.

► There is virtually no enforcement within the 50,000-square-mile Marine Resources Reserve. When I visited the islands in April, the *Guadalupe River*, a state-of-the-art patrol boat donated to the Park by U.S. citizens, sat idle. The Park lacked funds to fill the gas tank.

A Scary Place For a Shark

You may get the impression from some of these developments that the Galapagos is a scary place for a tourist right now. It isn’t at all, in my experience. It’s a very scary place for a hammerhead shark, though. What’s truly frightening is how deeply entrenched the fishing industry has become in the last few years and how invisible it remains to the casual observer.

“If current trends continue, we’re going to see a significant change in megafauna,” says Johanna Barry. “We’re going to see populations decimated. We’re looking at what predictive models are saying about *when* the systems will collapse, not if they will. It may only be another 10 years before divers begin to see dead zones.”

Where is the law while all this depredation is going on? The answer to that is somewhat complicated. With the guidance of the Charles Darwin Foundation, the Ecuadoran government signed into law a comprehensive management plan for the Reserve in 1992. The plan divided the Reserve into pristine zones and zones of local and traditional fishing, and was intended to severely curtail industrial fishing. But pressure from national and for-

So, What Can You Do?

Experts discourage a tourism boycott, which could drive more Galapagueros into the fisheries.

Divers can be effective in petitioning the government to enforce restrictions (or try harder to). But the most effective chain of complaint may be through the tourism industry.

The International Galapagos Tour Operators Association is a conservation-minded group of tour operators founded by David Blanton of Voyagers International in Ithaca, N.Y. Blanton and other IGTOA members plan to meet with the government of Ecuador later this year to express their concerns about the state of the environment in the Galapagos Islands. Your letters of concern will be used to support IGTOA's efforts. Address letters to: Galapagos Conservation Campaign, c/o IGTOA, PO Box 915, Ithaca, NY 14851.

For \$25, you can join Jack Grove's Conservation Network International. You'll receive the group's newsletter, *CNI News*, and if you have an e-mail account, you'll receive timely updates on the situation in the Galapagos. Contact CNI at 146 North Sunrise Dr., Tavernier, FL 33070; (305) 852-6004, or e-mail: ConNetIntl@aol.com.

To become a member of the Charles Darwin Foundation, send \$25 (tax deductible) to: Charles Darwin Foundation, Inc., Dept. 0553, Washington, D.C. 20073-0553; (703) 538-6833. Members receive the foundation's two newsletters, *Galapagos Bulletin* and *Noticias de Galapagos*.

Also, because diving visitors to the Galapagos spend the majority of their time (and money) on live-aboard dive boats, you have every right to let boat operators know where you stand on the issue of environmental degradation in the Galapagos. Before you book your trip, ask your travel agent or the dive operator's booking office the following questions:

- ▶ Do you allow spearfishing?
- ▶ Do you allow guests or crew members to catch fish for consumption on your boat?
- ▶ Do you allow crew members to keep or sell any surplus catch?
- ▶ Are any of your crew members involved in the commercial fishing industry?

eign fisheries was sufficient to nullify the law without ever overturning it.

In September 1995, Ecuador's president Sixto Duran Ballen announced that he would again (attempt to) prohibit large-scale commercial fishing in the Marine Reserve, ban all shark fishing, and strengthen enforcement, but the proclamation remains to date a statement of intention and not a law—as far as anyone knows.

In June 1994, government fisheries officials were able to lift fishing bans on lobsters, sharks and sea cucumbers imposed by the 1992 management plan. It stands to reason the same could be done to undercut the 1995 proposal, should it ever become "law."

But take for instance a relatively clear-cut case: sea cucumber harvesting out of season, without even falsified permits. On Jan. 12, 1996, Park wardens apprehended eight of 30 perpetrators on the west side of Isabela Island and seized 80,000 sea cukes. The offenders were confined to the Park headquarters, at least until a mob of 50 angry fishermen arrived and seized control of the offices for 12 hours.

Whether or not the poachers could have been prosecuted is also unclear because the Park shares jurisdiction of the Marine Reserve waters with the Ecuadoran Navy and the Fisheries Council. All cases are tried in the city of Guayaquil, often after long delays, by the Consejo Nacional de Pesca, the same folks who undermined the original 1992 management plan.

It's a neat little system. And it could get worse.

A Voice in the Wilderness

Back in 1975, Jack Grove made his first dives in the Galapagos, an experience, he says, that "blew my socks off." There were huge stands of black coral as shallow as 15 feet, lobster crawling everywhere, and schools of Mexican hogfish "so dense you could hardly swim through them." He recently returned to the same site and offered a bottle of champagne to any diver who could find a single specimen of Mexican hogfish. The species had been decimated by simple hook-and-line fishing.

Grove was so captivated by the Galapagos that he enrolled in the Park's Naturalist Guide course in 1977. After graduation, he crewed for seven years on the tourist boat *M.V. Bucanero*, and watched tens of thousands of pounds of fish taken by hook and line out of the cold, productive waters off Fernandina Island's Punta Espinosa in the Bolivar Channel. Today, Grove is the author of *Galapagos Fishes: A Comprehensive Guide*, president of Conservation Network International, and a professional dive tour leader. Among activists fighting to preserve the Galapagos, Grove is acknowledged as the best-informed, best-connected source for current and accurate information, which he disperses world-

wide through his CNI newsletters.

"I'm ready to speak out," Grove told me, "because what Ecuador is doing must be exposed to the international community. The degradation of the marine environment is the worst crisis since whalers removed tens of thousands of giant tortoises and introduced feral animals."

Grove's recent broadside, "Galapagos Perspective," points to a domino effect in the expansion of fishing modes and the political posturing that has earned their acceptance.

Spearfishing, deplored by Grove as "an environmental travesty" that is using government money to subsidize the "slaughtering of the last large, fearless fish of the Galapagos," arrived in the islands as a possible alternative livelihood for the out-of-work, illegal sea cucumber fishermen. The new catch-and-release sportfishing industry is largely self-monitoring, and sources say Galapagos billfish have begun to show up on the market. Creating new fisheries to accommodate illegal fishermen can only shift the climate from preservation to exploitation, and increase the power of the politician who seemingly controls them and uses the fear they inspire to pursue his own agenda.

Ironically, Eduardo Veliz, the Galapagos' congressman, was a classmate of Grove's in the 1977 Naturalist Guide course. Veliz, now one of the most powerful men in the Galapagos, incited the violent 1994 takeover of the Galapagos National Park headquarters and the Charles Darwin Foundation Research Station by sea cucumber fishermen—the pepineros—during which they demanded the reopening of the sea cucumber season. Veliz made three public announcements threatening to take tourists hostage until the sea cucumber ban was lifted. During that climate of violence, 80 giant tortoises were slaughtered, indicating a willingness on the part of the terrorists not only to take over the National Park but to destroy its reason for existing.

According to Grove, Veliz also effectively blocked legislation that would have controlled immigration to the Galapagos by attaching to the bill his own demands for total control of the islands through the municipal governments of the principal towns of the archipelago. That must have been a win-win situation for Veliz, since immigration feeds the ranks of the unemployed pepineros. Veliz's agenda calls for Galapaguero autonomy—control of the islands, Park and Marine Reserve—which can (Continued on page 103)

READER RATINGS



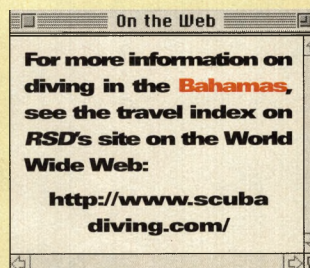
BAHAMAS

Saying you want to dive the Bahamas is like saying you want to climb the Himalayas. With more than 700 sandy spits of land strewn across a parcel of Atlantic the size of Wyoming and twice as warm, the obvious question is “where” and “with whom.” And because it starts only 50 miles from downtown Miami, is serviced by a fistful of airlines and is sold in packages by 28 major dive travel specialists (see our Dive Travel Directory, May '96), the dilemma of “when” and “how” is virtually eliminated.

This is where fellow RSD readers can shed some light by passing along their choices for where and how to get wet. While all 700 can be dived, eight were dived with enough frequency to be rated here.

Cay Sal, one of the Bahamas' most remote locales, was a surprising winner. On a scale of one to five, this area—halfway between Key Largo, Fla., and Cuba—

placed in the low fours for big animals and high fours for fish life, healthy reefs, value and overall score. Walkers Cay topped the Bahamas for big animals, as well as receiving high scores for value and overall score. Readers say New Providence has the best wreck diving, with a 3.63, as well as taking fours for wall diving, value and overall. San Salvador did very well, too, with the archipelago's best wall diving, 4.59, and scores in the fours for fish life, healthy reefs, value and overall score. Andros has the second best wall diving with a 4.40, and respectable scores for healthy reefs, value and overall. Other scores in the fours were Bimini for fish life, value and overall, Grand Bahama for value and overall, and Abaco for fish life and healthy reefs.



READER RATINGS



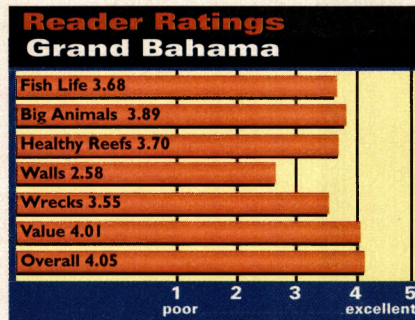
How We Got the Numbers

Reader rating forms were included in seven past issues, and were available to all readers, postage-paid. Ratings reflect the average scores on a scale of one to five: poor (1); below average (2); good (3); above average (4); excellent (5).

Dive Operators and Live-aboards

Dive operators were rated in seven categories:

- **Friendliness of staff**
- **Staff's willingness to let you manage your own profiles**
- **Staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites**
- **Quality of boats** Reader raters gave dive boats three separate scores, one each for condition of boat, space on board to gear up and amenities on the boat. These scores were averaged for a single "quality of boats" score.
- **Rental gear**
- **Facilities**



► Value for diving dollar

Live-aboards were rated in these categories (except rental gear and facilities), plus quality of food.

Bahamas Dive Operators

Bahama Divers

NEW PROVIDENCE • (809) 393-8724

- 4.64 friendliness of staff
- 4.00 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.18 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.68 quality of boats
- 3.67 rental gear
- 3.73 facilities
- 4.18 value for diving dollar

Bimini Undersea Adventures

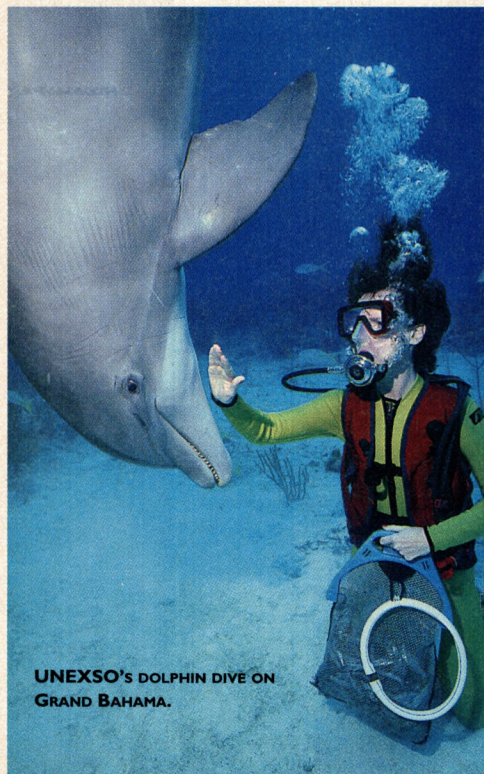
BIMINI • (800) 348-4644, (809) 347-3089

- 4.78 friendliness of staff
- 4.78 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.74 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.75 quality of boats
- 3.92 rental gear
- 3.39 facilities
- 4.04 value for diving dollar

Club Med Columbus Isle

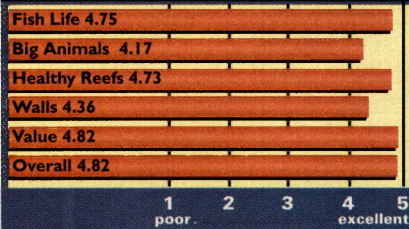
SAN SALVADOR • (800) CLUB-MED, (809) 331-2000

- 4.88 friendliness of staff
- 4.81 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.69 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites





Reader Ratings Cay Sal



- 4.63 quality of boats
- 4.62 rental gear
- 4.88 facilities
- 4.94 value for diving dollar

Dive, Dive, Dive, Ltd.

NEW PROVIDENCE • (800) 368-3483, (809) 362-1401

- 4.35 friendliness of staff
- 4.13 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.31 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.46 quality of boats
- 3.86 rental gear
- 3.85 facilities
- 4.08 value for diving dollar

Grand Bahama Watersports

GRAND BAHAMA • (800) 753-7282, (809) 373-6775

- 5.00 friendliness of staff
- 4.92 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.85 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.77 quality of boats
- 4.75 rental gear
- 3.75 facilities
- 4.92 value for diving dollar

Nassau Scuba Centre

NEW PROVIDENCE • (800) 327-8150, (809) 362-1964

- 4.50 friendliness of staff
- 4.29 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.57 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 4.19 quality of boats
- 4.50 facilities
- 4.29 value for diving dollar

Riding Rock Inn

SAN SALVADOR • (800) 272-1492, (954) 359-8353

- 4.36 friendliness of staff
- 4.50 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.36 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 4.03 quality of boats
- 3.33 rental gear
- 4.00 facilities
- 4.36 value for diving dollar

Reader Ratings Walkers Cay



Reader Ratings New Providence



Scuba Bimini

BIMINI • (800) 848-4073, (954) 359-2705

friendliness of staff 4.83

- 4.83 friendliness of staff
- 4.92 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 5.00 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 4.47 quality of boats
- 4.00 rental gear
- 3.82 facilities
- 4.58 value for diving dollar

Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean

NEW PROVIDENCE • (800) 879-9832, (305)

More Dive Operators

The following operators did not receive enough responses for their ratings to be included:

Bahama Island Adventures

BIMINI • (800) 329-1337

Brendal's Dive Shop International, Ltd.

GREEN TURTLE CAY • (800) 780-9941, (809) 365-4411

Cat Island Dive Center

CAT ISLAND • (809) 342-3053

Dive Abaco

MARSH HARBOUR • (800) 247-5338, (809) 367-2787

Diver's Haven

NEW PROVIDENCE • (809) 393-0869

Exuma Fantasea Ltd.

EXUMA • (809) 336-3483

Fernandez Bay Dive Shop

CAT ISLAND • (800) 940-1905, (809) 342-3043

Pittstown Point Landings

CROOKED ISLAND • (704) 878-8724

Romora Bay

HARBOUR ISLAND • (809) 333-2323

Small Hope Bay Lodge

ANDROS • (800) 223-6961, (809) 368-2013/2014

Spanish Cay Dive and Watersports

SPANISH CAY • (800) 688-4752, (809) 365-0083

Stella Maris Resort Club

LONG ISLAND • (800) 426-0466, (809) 338-2051

Sun Divers, Ltd.

NEW PROVIDENCE • (809) 325-8927

Sunskiff Divers

NEW PROVIDENCE • (809) 362-1979

Valentine's Dive Center

HARBOUR ISLAND • (800) 383-6480, (809) 333-2309

Walkers Cay

WALKERS CAY • (800) 513-5257, (305) 359-1406

Xanadu Undersea Adventures

GRAND BAHAMA • (800) 327-8150, (809) 352-3811

DOUG FERRINE

THE SHARK
RODEO AT
WALKERS CAY.



READER RATINGS



DOUG PERRINE

- 4.41** friendliness of staff
- 4.38** staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.52** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.87** quality of boats
- 4.27** rental gear
- 4.28** facilities
- 4.18** value for diving dollar

Underwater Explorers Society (UNEXSO)

GRAND BAHAMA • (800) 992-DIVE, (809) 373-1244

- 4.42** friendliness of staff
- 4.10** staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.41** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.58** quality of boats
- 3.76** rental gear
- 3.84** facilities
- 3.91** value for diving dollar

Live-aboards

Blackbeard's Cruises

(800) 327-9600, (305) 888-1226

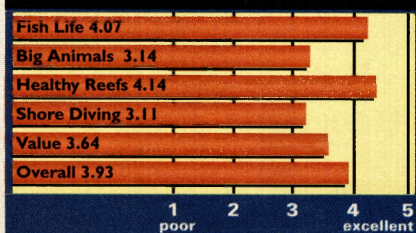
- 4.57** friendliness of staff
- 4.65** staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.59** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.64** quality of boats
- 4.08** quality of food
- 4.56** value for diving dollar

Nekton Diving Cruises/ Nekton Pilot

(800) 899-6753, (954) 463-9324

- 4.65** friendliness of staff
- 4.77** staff's willingness to let you manage

Reader Ratings Abaco



- your own profile
- 4.35** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 4.67** quality of boats
- 4.66** quality of food
- 4.55** value for diving dollar

Sea Fever Diving

(800) 443-3837, (305) 531-3483

- 4.45** friendliness of staff
- 4.73** staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
- 4.50** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 4.03** quality of boats
- 4.22** quality of food
- 4.00** value for diving dollar

Resorts

Resorts were rated in three categories:

- **Restaurant**
- **Staff** Reader raters gave resorts two separate scores for staff, one each for helpfulness of staff and friendliness of staff. These scores were averaged for a single staff score.
- **Value for diving dollar**

More Live-aboards

The following live-aboards did not receive enough responses for their ratings to be included:

Bottom Time II

(800) 234-8464, (305) 921-7798

Cat Ppalu

(800) 327-9600, (305) 888-1226

Dream II

(800) 741-5335, (407) 768-9859

MV Ballymena

(800) 241-4591, (809) 394-0951

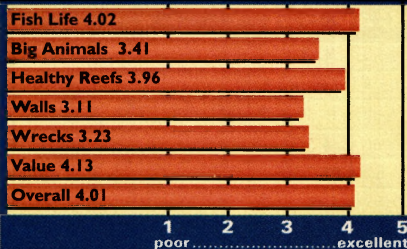
Phantom/Hidden Harbor Charters

(800) 717-CHARTER, (912) 264-1700

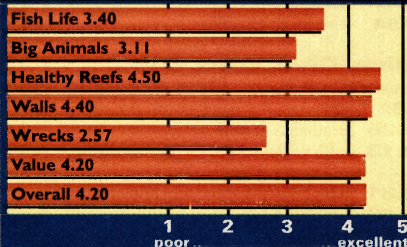
RV Sea Dragon

(954) 522-0161

Reader Ratings Bimini



Reader Ratings Andros



Resorts

Club Med Columbus Isle

(800) CLUB-MED, (809) 331-2000

4.50 restaurant

4.69 staff

4.73 value

Radisson Cable Beach

(800) 333-3333, (809) 327-6000

3.00 restaurant

3.56 staff

3.22 value

South Ocean Golf & Beach Resort

(800) 241-6615, (809) 362-4391

3.13 restaurant

3.57 staff

4.22 value



M.TIMOTHY O'KEEFE

Gear manufacturers have gone back to the drawing board to perfect the way you breathe under water. ScubaLab puts their factory-fresh regulators to the test.

by Jon Hardy

New Regulators



.....

It all started so well,

the two of you drifting along the wall with almost no motion or effort. Calm, warm and sunny—good to be alive. The clear, deep blue water had that unusual quality that only divers know: the hint of a shape just beyond the limits of visibility. At first the changes were subtle, slight differences in water temperature, movement and clarity. Then it happened. The bottom fell out. A downwelling. Now you're being sucked down, ever faster, ears pounding, head spinning, buddy gone, breathing harder and harder. It takes all your effort to breathe ... suck ... blow ... think! Use the inflator, ditch the belt, got to get out—up, get positive, keep breathing! Light ... the surface ... air! ... Lucky to be alive.

.....

And That's Why Performance Matters

The above is a true story of the day a vacation diver, like many of us, learned that vortexes really do exist and that positive buoyancy and a high-performance regulator can mean the difference between life and death.

Unfortunately, magazine ads, salespeople's opinions and breathing on a regulator when not under water can't tell you about a regulator's true performance. Only a breathing machine (simulator) and comprehensive and controlled open-water tests can. That's why all ScubaLab reviews of regulator performance are based on breathing machine and open-water testing. These objective, scientific evaluations are essential because:

► A major part of your workload as a diver is the work of breathing, due to breathing resistance in your body and regulator.

► Any regulator's performance degrades between servicing, whether the regulator is being used or stored away. Higher-performance regulators are significantly more likely to maintain performance between servicing.

► Poorly performing regulators increase the risks of diving, including running out of air, lung overpressure injuries, carbon dioxide excess, nitrogen narcosis and decompression sickness.

► When demand or stress increases due to depth, low tank pressure, faster breathing rates or some emergency, you are less likely to overbreathe a regulator of higher performance, thus reducing the likelihood of panic—a major cause of diving accidents.

► You may sometimes dive under conditions that require high performance, such as colder water, currents or rough water.

► When your buddy is low or out of air and you share air with two second stages, but only one first stage, both of you are safer with a high-performance regulator.

► Higher-performance first stages allow easier use of BCs, dry suits, lift bags, tools, etc.

The Testing

For this series of evaluations, we asked manufacturers to supply any new or redesigned regulators in their line that we had not tested in the past. Therefore, this test group includes regulators we've evaluated before but have been upgraded or changed—and some brand-new ones.

First, each regulator was put on a breathing machine at an engineering lab and run at 25 breaths per minute, 2.5 liters per breath, with a supply pressure of 1,500 psi. While submerged in water, the regs were taken down in a recompression chamber in 33-foot increments to a maximum depth of 198 feet, with computer printouts of performance at each increment. An additional test was performed at 165 feet, with supply pressure reduced to 725 psi to simulate a diver low on air.

For open-water testing, we used a team of four regular ScubaLab test team divers and five volunteer test divers. Together, they logged more than 320 test dives on these and the budget regs reviewed in our July issue, evaluating human performance characteristics such as comfort, ease of clearing, bubble interference, dryness and breathing ease.

Last month's issue of *RSD* included a report on budget regulators (see "No-Frills Regulators," July '96). At the high-performance end, Mares, Scubapro, U.S. Divers

and Zeagle also have other outstanding regulators that have not been changed since our test of high-performance regulators (see the June '95 issue) and are not included in this testing.

Closing the Gap

Our tests continue to show that improvements in regulator design are closing the performance gap between less costly regulators and high-end models. At the same time, the top end of regulator performance has gotten just about as good as it can without a major new

design breakthrough. The rumors are afoot: Several manufacturers are working on new ways to control airflow so that it remains virtually unchanged at differing tank pressures, depths and demands. At the same time, pneumatically assisted breathing and electronic control of breathing resistance are both possible. Ultimately, the sensing of the carbon dioxide level in your exhaled air may be the way your regulator adjusts to your breathing needs.

Sound too technical for a recreational activity? Hardly. Just think of how TVs, cars, computers and telephones have changed in the last 50 years. Likewise, advances in regulator performance—like those demonstrated in these tests—will continue, making diving safer and more enjoyable. At least in the United States.

European Standards

The European common market has developed standards or requirements for consumer products in many areas, including scuba equipment. Under new laws, U.S. dive equipment manufacturers who wish to continue distributing in Europe will be required to meet European standards, referred to as CEN or CE. Because non-Europeans are not allowed to participate in the development of these standards, the United States—with the largest and most sophisticated dive equipment manufacturing industry in the world—has no direct input, but must adhere to the standards in order to sell in the European market. The results are not good.

European requirements deal primarily with lab tests of materials, parts and assembly, and have very little to do with

actual performance in open water. The standards also make provisions for methods or systems that are ineffective and obsolete in the U.S., such as CO₂ cartridges in BCs and J-valves in place of submersible pressure gauges. Most importantly, European standards allow for regulator performance that is much lower than industry standards in the U.S. and include parameters which are both conflicting and impractical.

So what does all this mean for recreational divers?

► Because CE tests are complex and expensive, the cost of products will go up.

► Because positive pressure breathing is not allowed, regulator performance will have to be detuned, or two different versions of the same regulator will be produced—one that is detuned for the European market, and one that has full performance for the U.S. market.

► Some smaller manufacturers will be put at a great disadvantage if they lack the resources for such testing, particularly those manufacturers that do not have plants in Europe.

► Innovation may be stifled or slowed down.

The bottom line is that the CE mark on any of the regulators reviewed here does not provide any assurance of quality performance, but rather puts you on notice to make sure the product meets commonly used U.S. standards. Your primary concern will be with high-performance regulators, and the only objective, scientific tests continue to be RSD's ScubaLab and U.S. Navy evaluations.

CHART EXPLANATIONS

FIRST STAGE:

B = Balanced **D** = Diaphragm
P = Piston **HP** = High Pressure
LP = Low Pressure

PERFORMANCE:

WOB = work of breathing as measured on a breathing machine.

Stability = a measure of how consistently the regulator could repeat the same quality of performance at different depths and tank pressures.

Ergonomics = the human test scores derived from a regimen of ocean tests.

SCORING SYSTEM:

1 = Outstanding
2 = Excellent to Good
3 = Adequate
4 = Marginal
5 = Not Acceptable

17 REGULATORS IN REVIEW

Dacor Pacer and Quantum

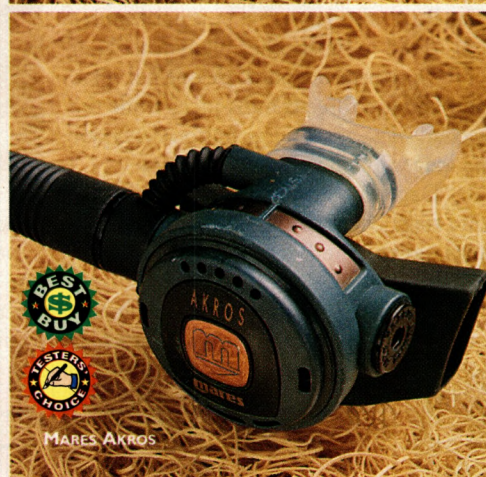
This year Dacor reintroduced its classic Pacer as the Pacer 96 XP, with the solid quality of past Pacers combined with some new engineering improvements. Ocean performance was outstanding and clearly above the Pacer's price bracket. The Pacer also has some unusual features not found in most other regulators. Half of the low-pressure ports are one-half-inch and half are three-eighths-inch, while the second stage has a purge button depressor no longer found in most regulators.

Dacor has also introduced a new second stage cover (see photo) on all regulators except the Pacer. We selected the Quantum to test, as we had the results from the budget regulator tests immediately available for comparison. The older



version scored slightly better on both machine and human tests. The purge is more difficult to use and to control with the new cover, and the exhaust bubbles hit the primary hose. However, the Quantum continued to perform well in odd

	FIRST STAGE				\$	PERFORMANCE			
	Type	Swivel	# of Ports			Machine Scores		Ocean Scores	Totals
			HP	LP		WOB	Stability	Ergonomics	
DACOR PACER 96 XP	BD	NO	2	4	\$348	2	3	1	6
DACOR QUANTUM	BD	NO	1	4	\$340	3	3	2	8
DSI SUPER FLOW	BP	NO	2	5	\$530	2	2	1	5
IDI OSPREY	BP	YES	2	4	\$330	2	1	1	4
MARES AKROS	BD	NO	1	5	\$410	1	1	1	3
MARES NIKOS	BD	NO	1	5	\$345	1	1	2	4
OCEANIC DELTA II	BP	YES	2	4	\$330	1	1	1	3
OCEANIC DELTA II	D	NO	2	4	\$330	2	1	1	4
OCEANIC DELTA II NITROX	BP	YES	2	4	\$350	1	2	1	4
SCUBAPRO MK20/G250	BP	YES	2	5	\$470	1	1	1	3
SEAC SUB ZX1000	P	NO	1	4	\$296	3	3	2	8
SEAC SUB ZX5000	BD	YES	2	4	\$496	2	1	3	6
U.S. DIVERS MICRA ADJ	BD	NO	2	4	\$498	1	1	3	5
U.S. DIVERS NORDIC	BP	YES	2	4	\$580	3	3	1	7
U.S. DIVERS PIONEER	BP	YES	2	4	\$425	2	2	2	6
ZEAGLE Z-DS4	BD	NO	1	4	\$376	1	1	1	3
ZEAGLE SENTINEL-DS4	BD	NO	1	4	\$354	4	3	3	10



repeated the same quality of performance over and over again.

Mares Akros, Nikos and Abyss

Well-known for high-performance regulators, Mares has introduced two new top contenders—the Akros and Nikos, both with outstanding breathing machine scores. Much of Mares' high performance comes from its Dynamic Flow Control (DFC) system, which improves flow and reduces the pressure drop from the first stage to the second stage as demand increases. Other manufacturers are now scoring as well in this aspect of performance by using different designs. Mares is still the leader in second stage design that doesn't employ a diver-controlled adjustment. Nearly all other high-performance regulators use such an adjustment.

During ocean tests, both of these regulators excelled at ease of clearing, dry breathing, ease of breathing and use in odd positions. The weakest area of ergonomics for these and other Mares regulators has been comfort. This appears to be due primarily to the stiffness and positioning of the hose in the low-pressure port, which also related to the crimping of hoses on these first stages.

The MR22 Abyss regulator is Mares' top performer and made the Best of the Best in our high-performance tests in the June

positions and to stay dry during ocean tests with the new cover.

Diving Systems International Super Flow

We tested a DSI Super Flow regulator in 1993 and found it to perform well above its price bracket. This time we tested the Super Flow with three different second stages: a metal case with adjustment, a plastic case with adjustment, and a plastic case with no adjustment, intended as a alternate air source. The metal second stage with adjustment is featured here and is definitely the best performer of the three. Although it was not noticeable during the ocean tests, the two plastic second stages became unstable during breathing machine tests.

Because these Super Flow regulators were designed for commercial diving, it takes nine to 12 turns to change the second stage adjustments from hard breathing to continuous flow. Recreational divers should be cautious with such a great range of adjustment. In-water performance was outstanding, with particular merit in dry breathing, ease of clearing and performance in odd positions.

The first stage has one "straight through" port for use with a larger hose, but when this "high-flow" port is used, it is difficult to position the pressure gauge hose.

International Divers Inc. Osprey

IDI received ScubaLab's award for the greatest improvement in regulator design in last issue's budget regulator evaluation. And so it continues, with this even better Osprey coupled with the IDI Airtec 360 first stage. In fact, at \$330, this regulator is still a budget buy. The Osprey has a metal second stage and a large purge cover. As with the other new IDI regulators, the top ocean scores were in comfort, dryness, ease of clearing and performance in odd positions. This is also an extremely stable regulator; during breathing machine tests it



TOP PERFORMERS

Model	Rank
SCUBAPRO MK20/G250	1
ZEAGLE Z-DS4	2
OCEANIC DELTA II (BALANCED PISTON)	3
MARES AKROS	4
MARES NIKOS	5
OCEANIC DELTA II (NITROX)	5
OCEANIC DELTA II (DIAPHRAGM)	6
IDI OSPREY	7



TOP 8 BEST BUYS

Model	Rank
OCEANIC DELTA II (BALANCED PISTON)	1
ZEAGLE Z-DS4	2
MARES AKROS	3
IDI OSPREY	4
OCEANIC DELTA II (DIAPHRAGM)	4
MARES NIKOS	5
OCEANIC DELTA (NITROX)	6
SCUBAPRO MK20/G250	7

WHICH IS BETTER? Balanced or Unbalanced? Piston or Diaphragm?

A scuba regulator is really two valves—one in the first stage, one in the second stage—that automatically open on demand while also adjusting to external pressure. Instead of a valve handle that must be turned by hand, such as a tank valve, the regulator opens and closes in response to your breathing. In fact, in many countries, the regulator is called a demand valve.

For years, instructors and divers have debated the merits of balanced or unbalanced, diaphragm or piston, diver-controlled adjustments or no adjustments. Based on four years of ScubaLab testing of nearly 200 different regulators on thousands of breathing machine runs, here are our insights.

► In general, balanced first stages outperform unbalanced first stages. However, there are high-quality unbalanced first stages that outperform some balanced ones.

► On average, piston first stages outperform diaphragm first stages, particularly at lower tank pressures. However, several of the best-performing regulators have balanced diaphragms.

► In general, balanced second stages outperform unbalanced second stages.

► Every regulator we have ever tested that received a high-performance rating has had an assist in the second stage—a venturi-like device used to aim the flow of air and improve performance.

► There is a definite trend in high-performance regulators to have diver-controlled adjustments, yet some still do it without the adjustment.

Confusing? No surprise. A regulator is the sum of its parts and must be evaluated as a whole. That's the reason we at ScubaLab test regulators using many different breathing machine and ocean tests which are totaled, averaged, compared and summarized for an overall evaluation.

'95 issue. The Abyss is now available in a titanium-coated version at \$660, making it the highest-priced regulator available. The titanium improves durability and reduces both scratches and corrosion.

Oceanic Delta II

The continuing improvement of the Oceanic Delta series has made the Delta II balanced piston the top best buy in this group and also a best buy when compared to budget regulators, with

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or (305) 351-9889



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*Prices Effective April 14-Dec 19, 1996. Prices subject to change.

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Roatan - Bay Islands - Honduras

(800) 676-2826 (813) 835-4449 011 (504) 45-1222

CIRCLE NO. 20 ON READER SERVICE CARD



only Oceanic's Alpha IV Sport having a better price-to-performance ratio.

During ocean tests, all three of the Delta IIs received top scores in ease of breathing, ease of clearing and dryness. Their scores for comfort and performance in odd positions were not far behind. Weakest scores were in bubble interference. All these regulators are adjustable with five to seven turns for full adjustment, which is a significant improvement over the older Deltas, which required 11 turns. The adjustment stops when turned to max



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CIRCLE NO. 64 ON READER SERVICE CARD

position, which is the easiest breathing, but continues to turn and makes a clicking sound at the minimum or hardest-breathing position. This design feature helps to prevent the adjustment from sticking in the hardest-breathing position.

The Delta II Nitrox is for use with mixed gases and therefore the first stage uses different O-rings and lubricants and has been O₂ cleaned.

Scubapro MK20/G250

This is *the* high-performance regulator for normal and extended-range recreational diving (depths to 200 feet on air). Over the last four years, we have tested hundreds of regulators on thousands of breathing machine runs and the Scubapro G250 has consistently had the best absolute scores for the lowest work of breathing of any regulator. One way the G250 achieves such high performance is by having two diver-controlled adjustments: both a min/max switch and a resistance dial. The switch is small and hard to use, particularly with gloves, but is intended only for surface use when the regulator is out of your mouth.

During every open-water test but

More On Regulators

ScubaLab tests have been reported in RSD for the past four years. Information from the most recent tests is available on our World Wide Web site (<http://www.scubadiving.com>), or our America Online area (Keyword: RSD). Budget regulators were featured in July '96, high-performance regulators in June '95, and alternate air sources in Jan./Feb. '95. You can order back issues by calling (800) 666-0016.

one, the G250 received an outstanding score from every tester—the only regulator to achieve this. The one lower score was for bubble dispersion, which is on average the lowest score on nearly all regulators. We also tested the G250 with the new shorter hose (24 inches vs. the usual 30 inches) and with the new second stage two-dimensional swivel. Breathing machine tests showed that the new swivel did not change performance, but the regulator received lower comfort scores on ocean tests, partly because of restrictions when turning to look left or when sharing air with the primary.

The MK20 first stage is new and is



intended to be Scubapro's first stage of choice for nitrox diving. This MK20/G250 combination also has the best performance of any regulator tested at lower tank pressures.

Seac Sub ZX1000, ZX5000

Seac Sub, based in Italy, is relatively new on the U.S. market. The ZX5000 is an adjustable regulator with better breathing machine scores, but poorer ocean scores than the simpler, less expensive ZX1000 nonadjustable regulator. Though both regulators were generally good on human tests, poor scores in dryness, performance

one, the G250 received an outstanding score from every tester—the only regulator to achieve this. The one lower score was for bubble dispersion, which is on average the lowest score on nearly all regulators. We also tested the G250 with the new shorter

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SEAC SUB ZX5000



U.S. DIVERS MICRA ADJUSTABLE



ZEAGLE Z-DS4



SEAC SUB ZX1000



U.S. DIVERS NORDIC



ZEAGLE SENTINEL

in odd positions, and inconsistencies in the second stage adjustment brought the ZX5000 score down.

U.S. Divers Micra Adjustable, Nordic, Pioneer

The Micra Adjustable performed as well on the breathing machine as the Micra+, an outstanding extended-range regulator tested last year. However, the Micra Adjustable did not do as well in ergonomic testing. Micra regulators have a hard-to-use min/max switch, but the Micra Adjustable has added a resistance dial, which may be the reason for the lower scores during human testing. The Micra is so small that adding the dial may be too much on this second stage. Best ocean scores came in ease of breathing and ease of clearing, while bubble interference was the lowest score. The purge has also been modified, making it harder to use.

The Nordic is a specialty regulator intended for use in cold water or other hostile environments. Therefore, it is detuned or set to have less flow than other regulators to help avoid freeze-ups. It also has vanes that act as heat exchangers to reduce the risk of freezing. During in-water tests, the Nordic earned excel-



U.S. DIVERS PIONEER

lent scores in ease of breathing in odd positions, ease of clearing, dryness, and got the best score of any regulator in this group for diverting bubbles.

The Pioneer is also intended for hostile environments, as in turbid or polluted water. This solid regulator scored well across the board with its best score being for dryness.

Zeagle Sentinel-DS4 and Z-DS4

The Zeagle Z-DS4 is a high-performance regulator that made the top performer list last year in the high-performance regulator review and now again with this newer

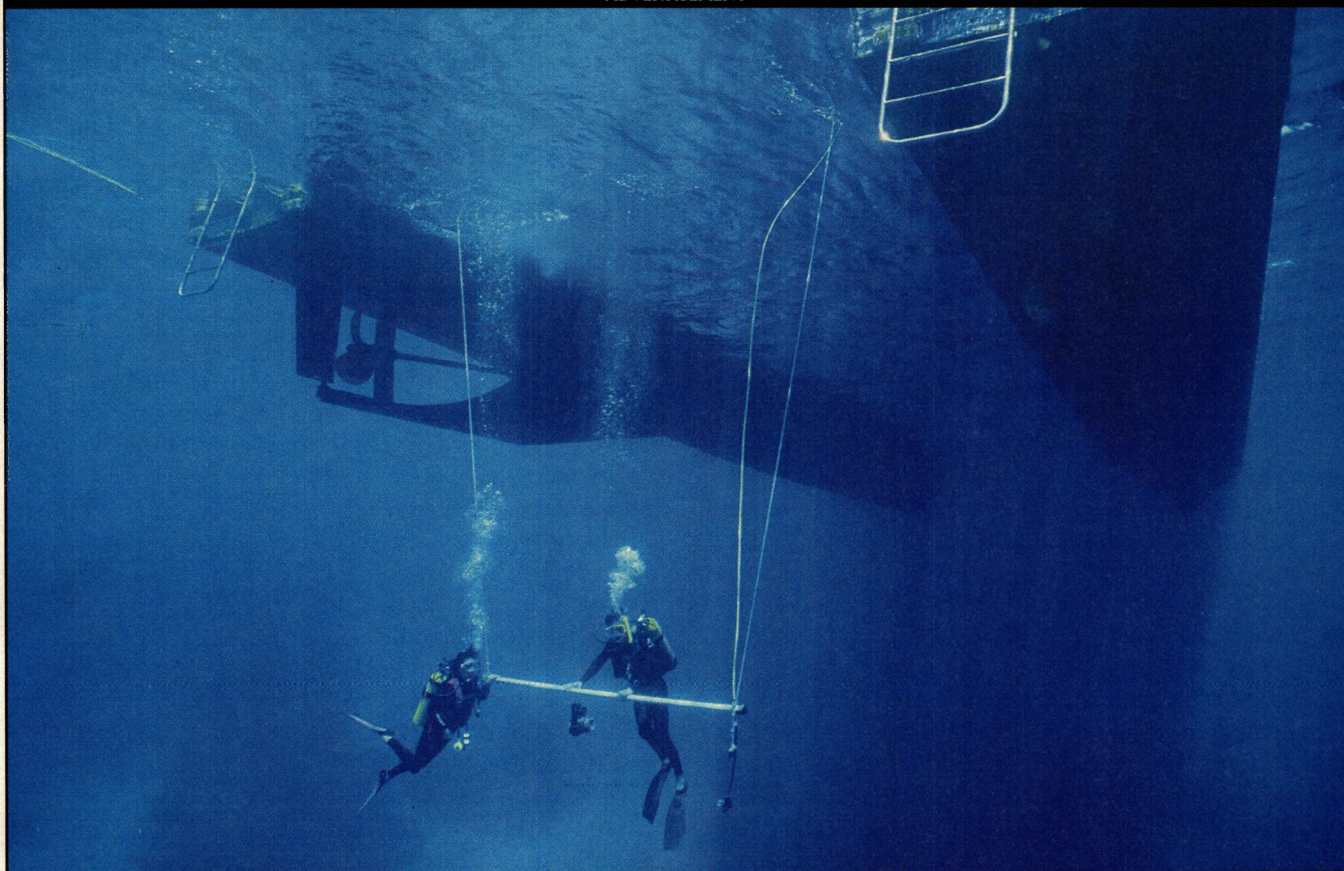
version. It has an easy-to-use plus/minus switch on the second stage. During ocean tests it received excellent scores on ease of breathing, use in odd positions, ease of clearing and dryness.

Although we tested the Sentinel on a DS4 first stage, it is Zeagle's new offering as an alternate air source, and should not be evaluated in the same way as the other regulators tested here. As is often true of regulators intended solely as alternate air sources, it had more bubble interference, wetness, and did not do as well in odd positions. Yet the Sentinel had surprisingly good performance during ocean tests on ease of breathing, both at 33 feet and 150 feet.

The lower scores on the breathing machine were primarily due to high exhale resistance and lack of consistency in performance. The Sentinel also has a side exhaust which is a distinct advantage when passing it as an alternate air source, because it is never upside-down. While using the DS4 first stage for these tests we discovered that the high-pressure port is poorly located in relation to the low-pressure ports, making it difficult to attach some hoses or transmitters to the first stage.

The Test Divers

Gil Acosta
Sharon Hamblin
Gini Handsfield
Jon Hardy
Gregg Holzer
Jason Manix
Pete Pehl
Jack Reitingier
Lorraine Sadler



Immerse Yourself in a Luxurious Live-Aboard Dive Vacation

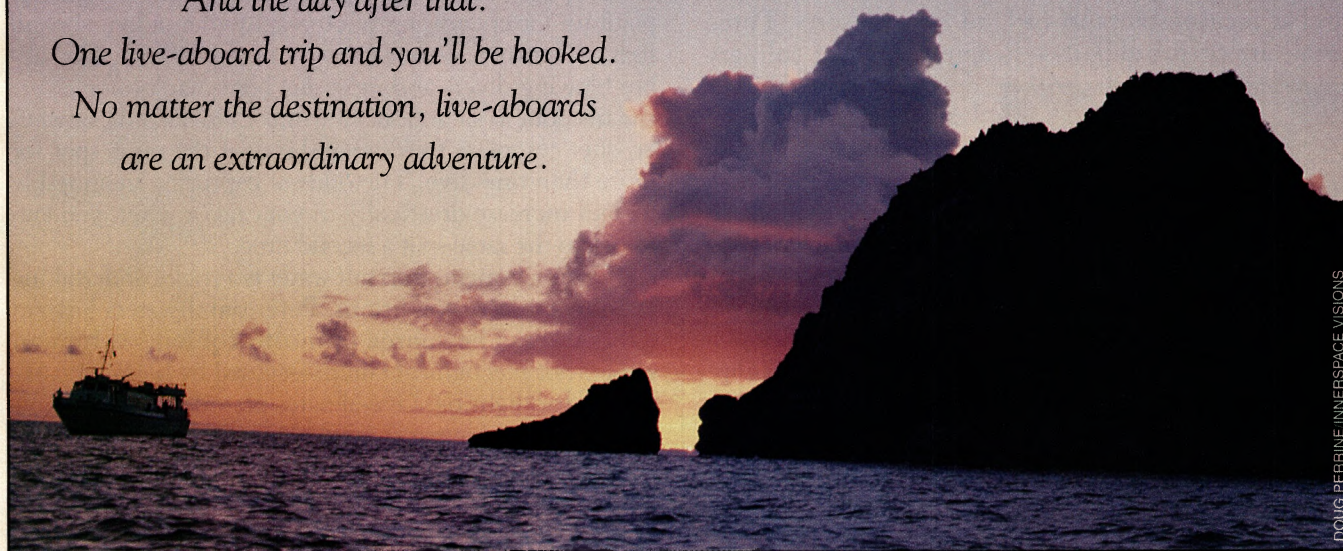
Wake up to a sunny day and an endless
sea and giant-stride into the water
at a secluded spot.

Do the same thing on the second day.

And the day after that.

One live-aboard trip and you'll be hooked.

No matter the destination, live-aboards
are an extraordinary adventure.



As Much as You Want. When You Want

Of course, many divers are quite content booking a trip at a resort, doing one or two dives a day and spending afternoons on the beach, shopping or exploring. But die-hard divers are the ones who just can't get enough time in the water. Their suits never dry and when the boat heads for home while the sun still blazes in the sky, a little voice in their head screams more, more, more! And if they can't find a boat going out in the afternoon or at night, they'll schlepp tanks, gear and cameras over hills, rocks and sand to dive any shore-accessible reef. If you find yourself in the latter group, then you definitely belong on a live-aboard.

This is not to say, however, that live-aboards are only suitable for "five dives a day" kind of divers. Freedom is the real appeal—the ability to do what you want to do, when you want to do it. In fact, today's live-aboards are similar to cruise ships in that they offer guests options. You can do one dive a day or five, you can sleep in all morning or nap all afternoon, often you can go ashore to explore. It's all up to you. The best part is, your gear is set up and ready to go all the time.

Typically, the first day is mildly hectic as guests arrive, set up dive gear, grease O-rings, settle into their cabins and prepare to explore. It usually doesn't take more than one dive to wash the cobwebs off equipment and erase the stress from divers' minds. As the days drift by, life becomes incredibly simplified as divers are lulled into the legendary live-aboard lifestyle: eat, sleep, dive, eat, sleep, dive . . . It really doesn't get much more complicated than that. The biggest decisions you'll make are deciding what to eat, which lens to take in the water or whether you want to do the 7 a.m. dive.

Sound too good to be true? Well, the truth gets even better. When you decide to dive, crew members help you gear up, explain the intricate details of the reef and assist you into the water. On many boats, the crew will be waiting on deck with warm towels when you return from your dive.

Live-Aboard Living

The food served on live-aboards rivals what you'll find at local restaurants or land-based resorts. Three meals are prepared daily—heaping bowls of culinary delicacies served either buffet- or family-style. You'll sample an unbelievable assortment of local specialties, fresh seafood and international delights. There's something for everyone, but it's never a problem for the chef to prepare dishes to order. Sump-tuous snacks are available between dives.

Accommodations are the only compromise involved in live-aboard diving. If you're traveling alone, you'll most likely share a cabin. For those seeking privacy or more space, private rooms with double beds are usually



COURTESY OF PETER HUGHES

available. The amount of privacy is typically reflected in the price of the cabin. If you're traveling economy class, you'll probably share a bathroom. On the high end, there are cabins with queen-sized beds, bathtubs and huge picture windows. Keep in mind that even the largest cabins will appear small when compared to hotel rooms. But the cabins are always clean and comfortable and a small room is soon forgotten as you immerse yourself in some incredible and unlimited diving.

Your Ticket to the Exotic

Another big attraction of live-aboard diving is the ability to access remote areas with pristine dive sites. Live-aboards initially became popular because they could get to spots previously inaccessible in the world's exotic, far-off locations—places that often took days to get to. In addition to those exotic locales only accessible by live-aboard, today you'll find live-aboard dive vessels operating in just about every popular dive destination. In frequently visited locales, the live-aboards dive some of the sites offered by land-based operations. But the live-aboard has an advantage—it can go where the conditions are perfect and there aren't any other divers in the water.

At night, under a starry sky, you'll be rocked to sleep as the boat gently rolls with the waves. This rhythmic routine hooks divers all the time, and it's easy to see why.

Picture-Perfect Match: Live-Aboards and Underwater Photographers

From a purely artistic standpoint, there simply is no better platform for underwater photography than a live-aboard. Fish and critters are not known to pose willingly for bubble-blowing divers and most day boats can't offer divers the freedom to sit and stay a while. Live-aboards, however, offer complete freedom and stay at the same spot for more than one dive. The odds of capturing memorable images increase drastically in your favor when you can return to the same spot a second time.

Taking cameras into salt water is a tricky undertaking even in the best conditions. Potential disasters lurk on every dive. The source of most problems is human error—not mechanical failure—caused by hasty preparation or bad lighting. Live-aboards provide all the amenities needed to prevent these mishaps: padded, dry, well-lit camera tables, large camera-only freshwater dip tanks and a staff that is always available to help photographers with delicate camera equipment before and after each dive.



DOUG PERRINE/INNERSPACE VISIONS

Many boats offer on-board, daily E-6 processing. There is no better way to learn underwater photography. Usually your film is developed in less than 24 hours, and you can view your images with a light box or slide projector. If you see something you've done wrong, you can correct or change your technique on your next dive. If you've been contemplating trying underwater photography, book a boat where photo instruction and camera rentals are available. Many live-aboards feature seminars or classes given by professional underwater photographers.

AGGRESSOR FLEET

The philosophy of the Aggressor Fleet and their eleven live-aboards is "the ultimate in live-aboard diving." The newest is the *Fiji Aggressor*, coming in July '97. On *Aggressor* boats, you can count on great meals and snacks, comfortable accommodations, relaxing hot tubs and plenty of bottom time. All boats are fully air-conditioned with large dive decks and ample guest gear storage in personal bins beneath the tank racks and freshwater showers on the dive deck. Because the *Aggressors* cater to underwater photographers, you'll find spacious camera tables and freshwater rinse tanks for photo gear, E-6 film processing, rental camera equipment and 110-volt stabilized charging stations. All offer video service including the ability to play VHS and 8mm tapes.

In 1995 *Aggressor Fleet* began offering special Jean-Michel Cousteau expeditions in which *Aggressor* guests participate as Jean-Michel Cousteau team members. Other well-known professionals such as Stan Waterman and Jim Church host programs aboard *Aggressor* boats as well. 800-348-2628 Fax 504-384-0817

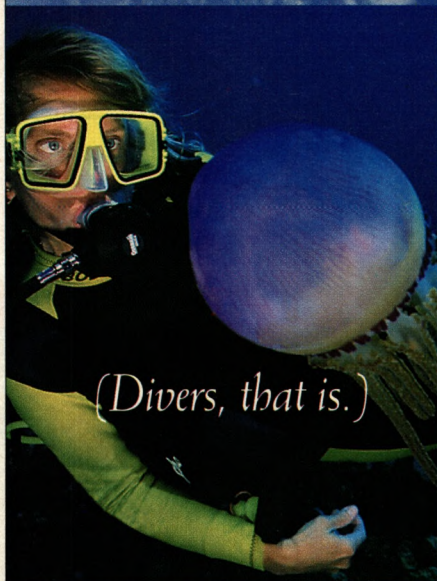
NEKTON PILOT

The 78-foot long *Nekton Pilot* is a one-of-a-kind SWATH dive boat. SWATH (small waterplane area twin hull) is a



The *Nekton Pilot's* state-of-the-art dive platform lowers divers to the water.

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Kona *Aggressor II*, Hawaii
Okeanos *Aggressor*, Costa Rica
Palau *Aggressor II*, Republic of Belau
Truk *Aggressor II*, Micronesia
Turks & Caicos *Aggressor*, BWI

Photo ©1996 Gui Garcia

For over a decade, *Aggressor Fleet*, the world's largest live-aboard operation, has helped 30,000 divers live their dreams. And now, with 10 luxury yachts at 9 top dive destinations worldwide, the possibilities are endless.

Discover over 2,000 sea creatures from aboard our floating resorts, offering private cabins with baths, hot tubs and photo labs.

Learn secrets from top photo pros, such as Church, Frier, Newbert & Waterman. Even dive with the planet's #1 underwater explorer, Jean-Michel Cousteau!

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Aggressor Fleet has the experience to make your's the best. Just ask any of our 30,000 dive buddies.

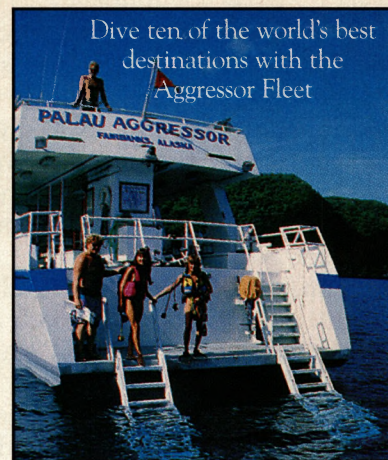


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Dive ten of the world's best destinations with the *Aggressor Fleet*

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radical technology that dramatically reduces rocking, rolling and seasickness. This means you'll have a comfortable cruise, an itinerary less prone to disruption by rough waters and the opportunity to dive remote areas of the Bahamas rarely visited by other live-aboards. The *Nekton Pilot* cruises from South Florida and offers three Bahama dive itineraries including the Bahama Adventure, Cay Sal Bank and Southern Bahamas.

Amenities of the *Nekton* include private cabins with private bath and shower, a jacuzzi on the 2,000 square foot sundeck, a spacious lounge, E-6 photo processing and video editing facilities. The state-of-the-art dive platform runs the full width of the vessel and lowers to the water for easy entries and exits. 800-UW WORLD (800-899-6753) Fax 954-463-8938

PETER HUGHES DIVING, INC.

The Peter Hughes fleet of five live-aboards includes *Sea Dancer* (Turks & Caicos), *Sun Dancer* (Palau), *Wave Dancer* (Belize), *Wind Dancer* (Bay Islands) and the newest boat, *Moon Dancer* (Red Sea). Peter Hughes Diving also handles all bookings for and owns a share of the

FeBrina in exotic Papau New Guinea.

The Dancer fleet live-aboards feature large air-conditioned staterooms, private baths, state-of-the-art entertainment systems and spacious sundecks. Morning coffee service, plush bathrobes and hot deck towels are just a few of the amenities that make the Dancer fleet so special.

Each vessel is also equipped with large photo tables, E-6 processing and a full line of video and camera rental equipment.



Whether diving or relaxing, your every need will be met on Peter Hughes' Dancer live-aboards.

The Bahamas



Why Rough It ?!

When you can now dive the remote and pristine Bahamas in comfort and style aboard the world's first SWATH live-aboard dive boat, the *Nekton Pilot*. Experience the first class accommodations, the delicious cuisine, and the hassle-free diving from the elevating dive platform. Departing from South Florida and Great Exuma for week-long cruises throughout the Bahamas, the *Nekton Pilot* is designed to pamper divers seeking adventure and the unique.

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Conception

Rum Cay

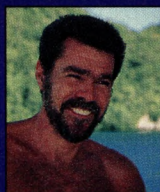
San Salvador

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Cay Sal Bank

Gingerbread Grounds

Upon
The Sea
The
Waves
Dance
Beyond
The Sea
And
Its Waves
The Sun
Rises
As
The Sun
Rises
The Wind
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Across
The Sea
Creating
A Wave
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Rigid Deco Bar

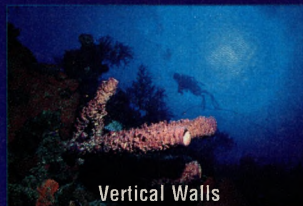


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But we know that a liveboard is only as good as
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Turks & Caicos Islands



Vertical Walls



Humpback Whales



Schooling Fish



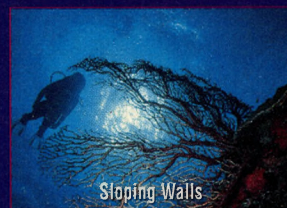
Sea Mounts



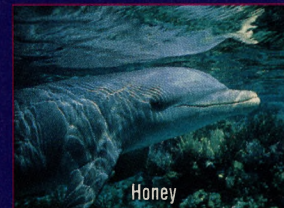
Bay Islands, Honduras



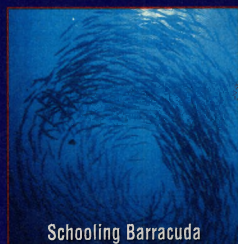
Belize, Central America



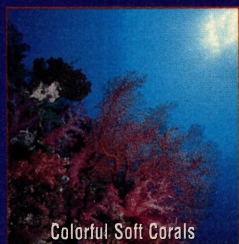
Sloping Walls



Honey



Schooling Barracuda



Colorful Soft Corals



Palau, Micronesia



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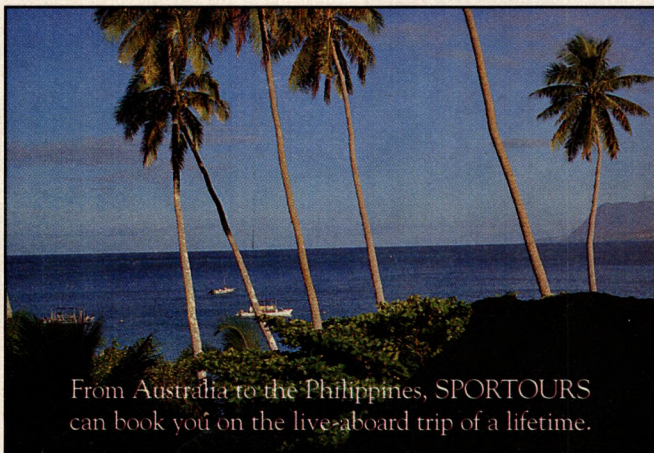
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Diving from the *Dancer* boats couldn't be easier: fins are stored in a handy rack on the dive platform, ready for your entry; large storage bins protect your accessories and a wetsuit rack and clothesline offer room for drying personal gear between dives.

Unique to the *Dancer* fleet is the rigid "Deco" bar that hangs 15 feet below the dive platform giving you a convenient safety stop and panoramic view of the reefs below.

Cruises on Peter Hughes' *Dancer* boats run every week and last from Saturday to Saturday, with the exception of the new *Moon Dancer* which offers seven and ten-night cruises. 800-9-DANCER Fax 305-669-9475



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MIKE BALL DIVE EXPEDITIONS

The hot news from Mike Ball Dive Expeditions is their expansion into Papua New Guinea. Mike Ball Dive Expeditions' Australian dive vessels include *Watersport*, *Supersport* and *Spoilsport* and *Telita* in Papua New Guinea. These spacious stable vessels provide superior dive facilities, air-conditioned accommodations, superb meals and a program of special dive, entertainment and educational activities. Mike Ball vessels have received 13 awards in the three years *Rodale's Scuba Diving* has been giving Readers' Choice Awards.

Itineraries are suitable for the adventuresome diver seeking exciting shark and big fish action, exotic marine life and exceptional reefs, as well as wreck and deep wall diving. Divers can explore the outer edge of the Great Barrier Reef, the remote oceanic reefs in the Coral Sea plus the leg-

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SPIRIT OF BORNEO

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CUAN LAW

CAYMAN ISLANDS
CAYMAN AGGRESSOR III

EASTERN CARIBBEAN
CARIBBEAN EXPLORER

COSTA RICA
OCEANOS AGGRESSOR
SEA HUNTER
UNDERSEA HUNTER

FIJI
MATAGI PRINCESS II
NAI'A

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS
GALAPAGOS AGGRESSOR
GALAPAGOS AGGRESSOR II
LAMMER LAW

HAWAII
KONA AGGRESSOR

MALDIVES
KEEMA
MANTHIRI

PALAU
PALAU AGGRESSOR II
SUN DANCER
OCEAN HUNTER

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
TELITA
TIATA
GOLDEN DAWN
MELANESIAN DISCOVERER

RED SEA
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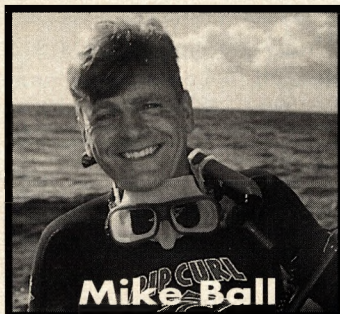
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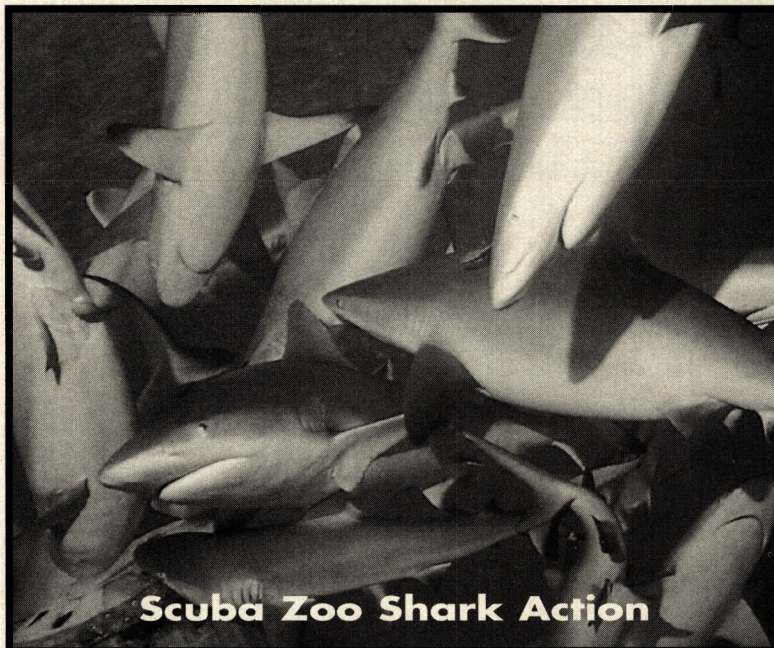
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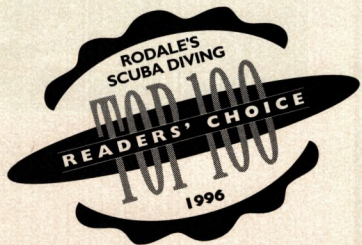
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11 Nights\$3249



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1996 BEST TRAVEL BARGAINS

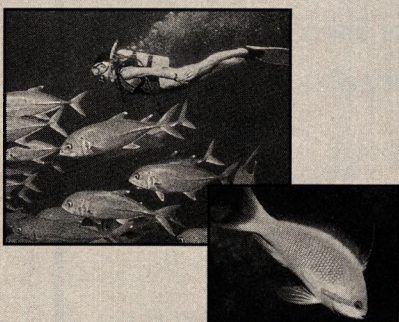
Thailand



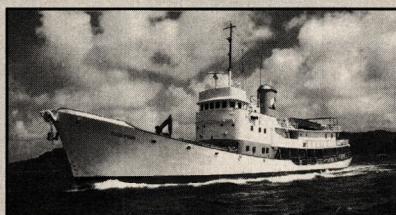
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TRUK LAGOON'S



S.S. THORFINN

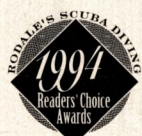


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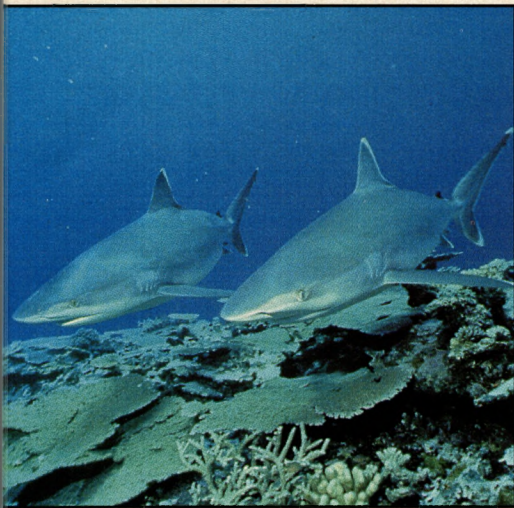


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SEE & SEA

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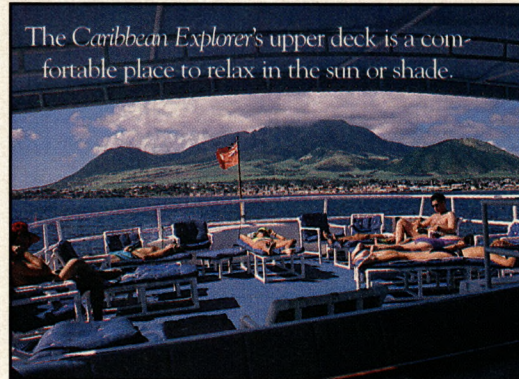
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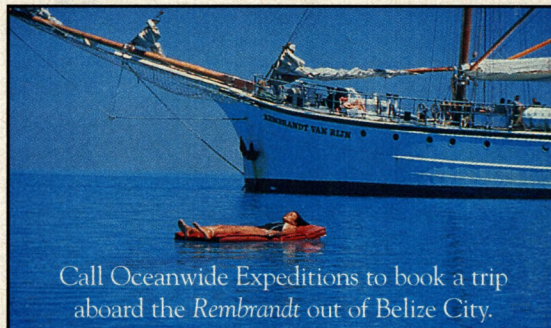
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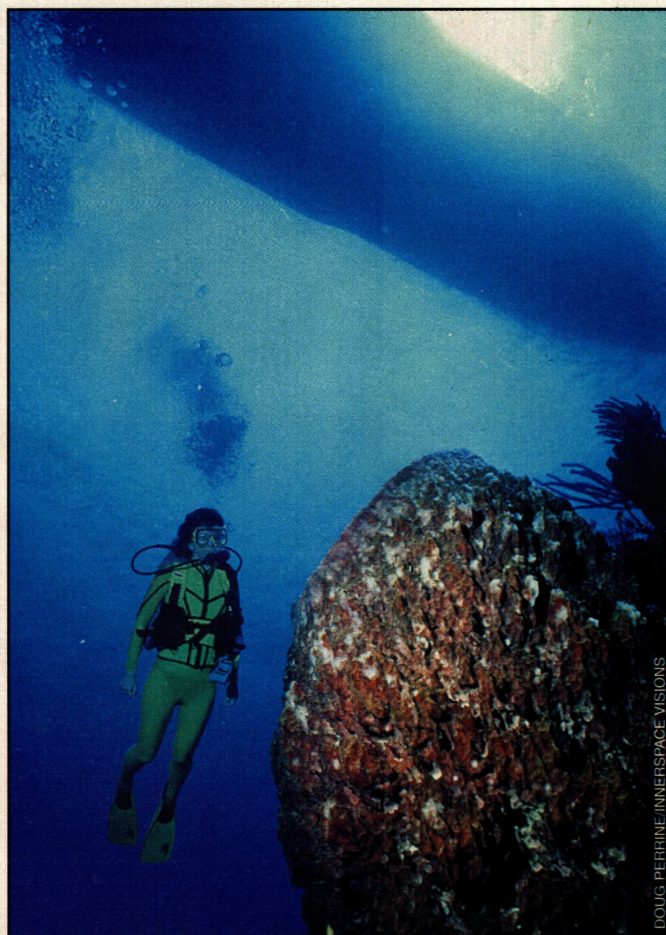
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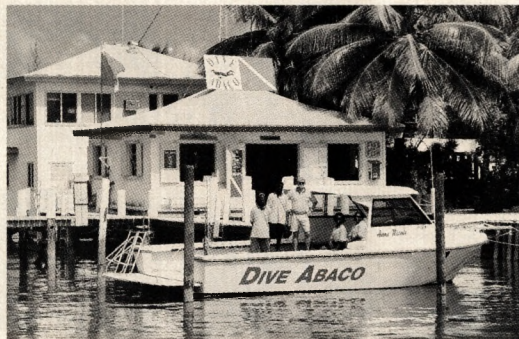
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RSD's Beginner's Guide to Underwater Photography

From autofocus to zoom, O-rings to f-stops, everything you need to know—except how to make fish say “cheese.”

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTY SNYDERMAN

There are almost as many reasons to take up underwater photography as there are pieces of equipment and theories about how to take great pictures. Some divers want to document the natural history of marine life, others like to take images of their dive buddies at play, while still others want to create a pictorial memory of great vacations filled with fun. Whatever your motivation, getting started is not difficult, nor should it be intimidating. If you can handle dive tables, you can certainly deal with f-stops. But there are some basic questions you should answer before taking the plunge.

► *Do I need to be an experienced diver first?*

Diving with a camera system in your hands makes otherwise simple tasks like mask-clearing and monitoring your gauges a bit more complicated. Also, in order to position your body and camera for shots, you must have the buoyancy skills to do so without jeopardizing your safety or damaging the marine environment. Without mastery of diving's fundamental skills, it's not practical or safe to undertake underwater photography.

► *Should I take still photographs or videos?*

While both activities involve swimming around under water with a camera in your hand, there



MORE THAN 40 PERCENT OF RSD READERS LIST UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY AS A PRIMARY INTEREST. BESIDES ALLOWING DIVERS TO BRING BACK IMAGES OF A PLACE FEW CAN VISIT, UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY ALSO TEACHES YOU TO BE A BETTER, MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVER—AND A MORE CAREFUL DIVER.



FROM LEFT: THIS PAIR OF GARIBALDI WAS CAPTURED WITH A NIKONOS EXTENSION TUBE

SYSTEM—THE SIMPLEST AND EASIEST TO USE CAMERA SETUP. GIVEN THE RIGHT WATER CONDITIONS, SILHOUETTES LIKE THIS MANTA RAY ARE SURPRISINGLY EASY TO CREATE. FOR PHOTOS LIKE THIS SHOT OF A WOLF EEL PEERING FROM ITS LAIR, IT'S BEST TO USE AN SLR (SINGLE LENS REFLEX) SYSTEM. BY LEARNING A FEW BASIC RULES, LIKE THOSE FOR STROBE PLACEMENT, YOU CAN PRODUCE CONSISTENTLY WELL-EXPOSED IMAGES.

are some important differences to consider.

Video Advantage: Capturing good-quality scenes on videotape is relatively easy. Most divers are pleasantly surprised by their ability to record scenes with technically excellent image quality on their first try. This is especially true in wide-angle scenes of reefs, kelp forests,

divers, sharks and dolphins, etc.

Video Disadvantage: Unedited videos are boring! While the technical aspects might be acceptable, it often takes 45 unedited minutes or more to produce two interesting minutes of footage. After a particularly exciting dive, those two interesting minutes might be enough to keep viewers interested for one sitting, but what do you do with the tape after that viewing?

Video Disadvantage: After an initial viewing, the only thing unedited videos are good for is curing insomnia. The money, equipment and time required to edit scenes and create a story that will keep viewers interested is significant. The footage needs to be viewed and logged in real time before you can edit a single sequence.

Still Photography Advantage: Whereas making a good video requires a number of high-impact sequences, you can make a great print to hang on a wall or to give as a gift with little money and a single still photograph.

Still Photography Advantage: Compared to video, editing stills is fast, easy and considerably less expensive. Putting together an interesting slide show is not nearly as involved as creating a video.

Still Photography Disadvantage: Taking

good still photographs requires practice, evaluation and effort. With the possible exception of macro and close-up photography, the results of early dives are typically disappointing compared to expectations.

► OK, I want to try still photography. How much should I invest?

A complete system—one of everything with ample backups—can cost \$10,000. A simple point-and-shoot single-use camera (often called disposable) in a watertight housing costs as little as \$115. A semi-sophisticated starter set runs roughly \$700 to \$2,000, depending on your definition of semi-sophisticated. Betwixt and between, there are lots of options allowing you to get started and add on as you desire, without having to start over (see "Choose Your Weapon: Basic Camera Systems," page 80).

► Isn't there a single, all-purpose camera setup I can use for everything?

Trying to put together a single camera setup that enables you to take full-frame, quality images of everything from nudibranchs to whales is like trying to purchase a car that is great for family vacations, gets great gas mileage and has a chance to win the Indianapolis 500. It just doesn't exist.

Every piece of photographic equipment is designed to do specific things well. Used as designed, your gear can capture the same high-quality images that the top pros get. But when photo gear is used outside of design parameters, the results generally end up in the nearest trash can.

► I just want to photograph my buddies and capture the

beauty of reefs. What do I need?

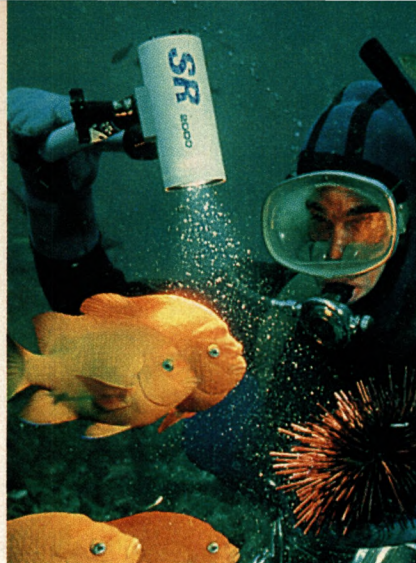
If you want to photograph divers and wide-angle scenes, consider a basic Nikonos V or Sea & Sea Motor Marine II-EX package. Both are range-finder cameras: The photographer uses an accessory viewfinder to compose and estimate distance to subject. A camera, wide-angle lens, strobe, arm, tray, carrying case and other accessories will run from \$1,475 to \$3,000, depending on how wide you want to shoot, which will determine the required lenses and size of strobe. The wider the lens, the more expensive (generally) and the more strobe coverage you'll need.

► What if I want to shoot the small stuff, too?

If you want to photograph subjects the size of nudibranchs, coral polyps, Christmas tree worms and fish faces, you need to add an extension tube system for a Nikonos V or a Sea & Sea macro conversion lens for a Sea & Sea Motor Marine II-EX. Expect to put down an extra \$50 to \$175 for adding macro capabilities to your wide-angle setup. Beginners in underwater photography should begin by shooting the small stuff: it's easier and less expensive.

► What about those incredible fish portraits you see in the books by the pros?

If you want to photograph typical butterflyfish- to angelfish-sized reef creatures as well as they can be photographed, you need a single lens reflex camera made for under water such as a Nikonos RS or Sea & Sea SX 1000, or a topside camera such as a Nikon N90s, F4 or Canon EOS 1 that can be put into an underwater hous-



ing. Single lens reflex systems are top-end because you have the ability to look through the lens and see exactly what the lens "sees," allowing you to frame, focus and compose your subject precisely. The downsides of single lens reflex systems are cost and the risk of losing a significant investment on any given dive due to flooding.

► *Should I use print film or slide?*

Prints, if you want to send copies to mom. Slides, if you want to show the dive club or get published. Pros and serious hobbyists use high-quality slide film for two reasons: (1) To preserve a shot's original colors. With print film, an operator—who may or may not have ever been under water—sits at a print machine and determines what colors are in the final photo. (2) Publishers and art directors of books and magazines want slides, not prints. Slide film also allows you to select which shots to turn into prints and to determine size.

► *Who makes the best equipment?*

Not too many years ago, that question would have been easier to answer. These days, the surviving manufacturers all seem to make equipment of reasonable quality. That doesn't mean any of the gear will always work. Constant tinkering with gear is as much a part of underwater photography as diving.

Manufacturers such as Nikon and Sea & Sea produce every needed piece of gear for their own camera systems. Other manufacturers such as Ikelite, Helix and MCD (Marine Camera Devices) make quality strobes and other accessories that can be used with a wide variety of cam-

eras, but they don't build cameras.

GETTING THE PROPER EXPOSURE: How To Use a Camera, Strobe and Light Meter Together

At first, the most difficult part of underwater photography—with the possible exception of keeping salt water on the outside of your equipment—is learning how to get the proper exposure. But here's the good news: If you take the time to learn a few camera basics, you can produce consistently well-exposed images.

Inside the Box: F-Stop, Shutter Speed, Film Speed. Whether you're using today's sophisticated models or one made a hundred years ago, a camera is still a light-tight box with a hole in it. A lens gathers light rays and focuses them on the film. Three components in the camera system enable the photographer to control light in order to get the proper exposure: (1) the size of the opening in the lens, known as the aperture or f-stop, (2) the shutter speed, or amount of time the shutter is open, and (3) the film speed, or sensitivity of the film to light.

The Light Meter. Given any two of these factors, a properly aimed light meter can help you determine the third. Usually you tell your light meter the film speed and shutter speed you are using, then the meter will suggest an f-stop that will give you the proper exposure for any given shooting situation. A light meter is built into many cameras, including the Nikonos V and Sea & Sea Motor Marine II-EX.

Using a Manual Strobe. First, remember that strobes illuminate only the foreground. No strobe ever made can illuminate backgrounds more than

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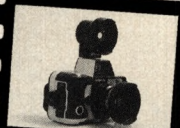
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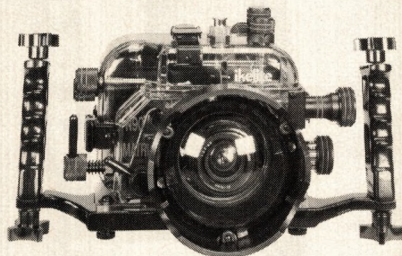
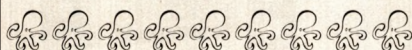


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10 feet away. Even when a strobe is used to light the foreground subject, a light meter is needed to determine the exposure in the background, especially when the background is sunlit water.

Using a Strobe's Guide Number. The intensity of the light emitted by the strobe and the strobe-to-subject distance are the critical factors in determining exposure of foreground subjects. A strobe has a guide number which indicates its power. This guide number varies according to the speed of film you're using. A list of the strobe's guide numbers can usually be found in the user's manual provided by the manufacturer.

Formula for Foreground Exposures.

Once you know your strobe's guide number for the film you're using, a simple formula can help you determine your camera settings in order to get a proper foreground exposure: *guide number divided by strobe-to-subject distance equals f-stop.*

For example, let's say you're using 100 speed film. You look in your user's manual and find that your strobe has a guide number of 32 with that speed film. If your strobe-to-subject distance is four feet, you would use an f-stop of f/8 as a starting place.

$$\frac{32}{4 \text{ ft.}} = f/8$$

If your strobe-to-subject distance is 2

TAKING IT ONE F-STOP AT A TIME

10 Golden Rules for Aspiring Photographers

understanding, not ownership of equipment. Get comfortable with one type of photography and one type of photographic system before moving on, especially in the beginning.

3. Diving Skills Come First. Before taking up underwater photography, you must master the fundamental diving skills that will allow you to do both at the same time. Buoyancy control and monitoring gauges are especially important. If buoyancy is not second nature, you are not ready for a camera.

4. Save the SLR. Avoid buying a single lens reflex camera system until you have flooded enough dive lights or other gear to truly understand why things flood and how to prevent future flooding. Range-finder camera systems are easier to use, harder to flood and less expensive to replace if they are flooded.

5. Mine Your Trash for Gold. When you review and edit your pictures, don't just decide that an image is no good and throw it away. Analyze the parts of your photographs to see where your strengths and problems are. Figure out what you did right and where you need to improve. For instance, your composition and focus might be right on the mark, but your strobe placement might need some attention.

6. Cousteau Was a Novice Once, Too. Be patient with yourself. Cousteau didn't capture the beauty of the underwater world on his first expedition and neither will you. Like everyone else, you will experience a humbling learning curve. Accept the challenge of learning new skills and make that part of your motivation.

7. Grease Easy. Perhaps the most common beginner mistake: putting too much silicone grease on O-rings. The grease doesn't make the watertight seal, the O-rings do. A light sheen of grease is sufficient. The grease serves to lubricate O-rings and to allow them to slide into place without pinching and rolling. Too much grease causes grit and debris to adhere to O-rings, and foreign matter is the biggest enemy of the integrity of any seal.

8. Get Testy. Test your equipment before your dive (or dive trip). Everyone intends to check out their equipment. The pros do it. Too often the hobbyists only mean to. Every piece of gear will eventually have some kind of problem, need a little tweaking or an overhaul. Find out at home before your trip rather than while the gang is gearing up.

9. Blaze Your Own Trail. Don't accept a statement as photographic fact just because someone with more gear says so. There's a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding floating around. Analyze, don't memorize, what people tell you.

10. Practice, Practice, Practice. Underwater photography seems to be a hobby in which too many people believe that owning the gear is enough to make them good photographers. Bowlers, golfers, tennis players, runners and racketball players know that performance depends upon practice. Underwater photography is no exception. Even time in a pool will help familiarize you with the location of camera and strobe controls so that when the time comes, you can be quick and precise.

feet, you would use $f/16$ as a starting place.

$$\frac{32}{2 \text{ ft.}} = f/16$$

Bracketing. These strobe-to-subject distances and f-stops provide good starting places with a common shutter speed of one-90th of a second. When using a manual exposure system, it's common practice to bracket your exposures by shooting the same shot one f-stop higher (a smaller aperture) and one f-stop lower (a wider aperture) to ensure at least one of the three frames has the proper exposure.

The Fallacy of Automatic. It's a common mistake to think that cameras have an "automatic" setting, a mode that enables the camera to take care of all the technical aspects, so all you have to do is compose and shoot. This creates a mind-set that makes improving your technique difficult.

Typically, the mode designated by the letter "A" indicates aperture priority, not automatic. Used with through-the-lens metering (TTL), aperture priority can help you get the proper exposure if you learn how it works. But if you want to take great photos consistently, don't fall into the trap of thinking you can turn your brain off when you set your camera on A.

Wide-Angle Photography and TTL Metering. In any photographic setting in which you want to show water color in the background of your shot (where you want the water to be exposed properly as blue or green, not black or white) and where you are using a strobe to illuminate a subject in the foreground, you must first take a light meter reading of the background. This reading will determine your aperture (f-stop).

Next, with the camera shutter speed set on manual or aperture priority and the strobe on TTL, apply another version of our formula. This time, *guide number divided by f-stop equals strobe-to-subject distance*. For example, if your strobe's guide number is 32 and the light meter has told you to set your f-stop at $f/8$ for proper background exposure, you must not be more than four feet from your subject in order for your strobe to provide the proper exposure.

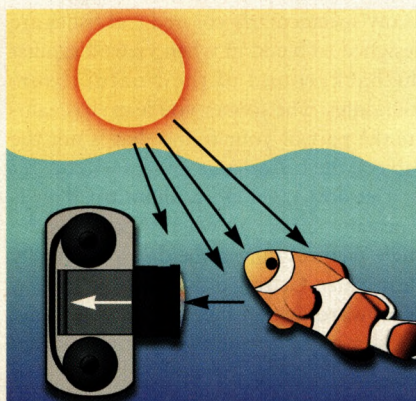
$$\frac{32}{f/8} = 4 \text{ ft.}$$

As long as your strobe is close enough

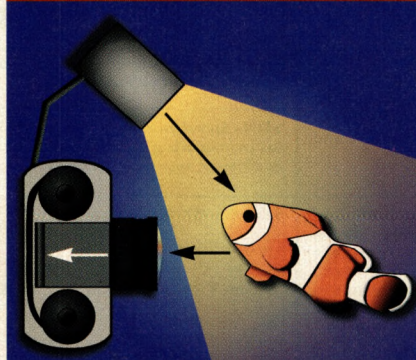
to be effective and *your foreground subject occupies at least three-quarters of your frame*, aperture priority and TTL should give you a good exposure.

Conclusion. The key to getting good

Easy as 1, 2, 3



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IN WIDE-ANGLE SHOTS, TO BALANCE NATURAL SUNLIGHT IN THE BACKGROUND (DIVER AND WATER) WITH STROBE LIGHT ON THE FOREGROUND SUBJECT (SEA FAN), FIRST TAKE A LIGHT METER READING ON THE BACKGROUND WATER, SET YOUR F-STOP ACCORDINGLY, THEN APPLY THE FORMULA: GUIDE NUMBER DIVIDED BY F-STOP EQUALS STROBE-TO-SUBJECT DISTANCE.

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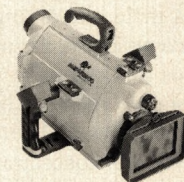
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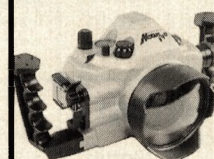
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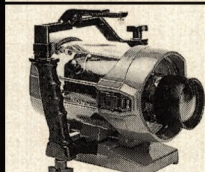
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CIRCLE NO. 75 ON READER SERVICE CARD

AUGUST • 79

wide-angle exposures is to learn a few fundamentals and to bracket your exposures no matter which system you use, manual or TTL. TTL works great in macro but needs massaging for wide-angle work. It's a little like diving physics: not all that complicated, but not exactly what most of us think of as fun, either. However, the sooner you learn how your camera system measures and controls light, the sooner you can concentrate on the fun aspects of composition and capturing the beauty of the marine environment.

TRANSITIONS TO THE U/W WORLD

If you have a background in topside photography, your experience is directly transferable to shooting under water. However, there are five new techniques that land photographers must adopt when shooting under water:

► **Get rid of the water.** The less water you shoot through, the better your pictures will be. Colors will be snappier and subjects will appear sharper. On land we often take pictures from 20 feet away from our subjects, sometimes farther. Under water, good shooters almost never work from as far as eight feet away, even in crystal-clear tropical water. In the same situation, beginners might shoot from eight feet away, serious amateurs from four feet, and those people who try to pay the mortgage by selling their work from one foot.

► **Get wide, get close.** On land, it's common to use wide-angle lenses and back up to take in a scene. Consider a shot of your entire family at a reunion, or a shot of the Grand

Canyon. Under water, we generally do just the opposite. We use wide-angle lenses and get close, allowing us to shoot through as little water as possible.

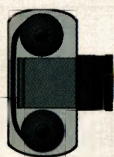
► **Look for contrast.** Be aware of backgrounds and look for color contrast between your subject and its background. Many spectacularly colored reef fishes are designed to blend in when viewed against the background of their natural surroundings. The sooner you learn to evaluate the part of your frame that is not the subject, the better your images will be.

► **Get down, get close, shoot up.** This is especially important when shooting wide-angle pictures during the day in relatively clear water. Getting down and shooting at an upward angle often allows you to get good separation between your subject

and background as the subject is isolated against water color, and the upward angle adds a sense of drama. Getting close helps provide color and image sharpness.

► **Position strobes above and to the side.** Because of suspended particles in the water column, strobe positioning is critical in underwater photography. As divers, we readily travel halfway around the world to experience 150-foot visibility. However, if that were the visibility at the airport for your flight, you'd never get off the runway. The point is: there are a lot of suspended particles in the water, even water we think of as crystal clear. No one can make the particles disappear, but we can all take action to minimize the negative impact of the backscatter caused by illuminating them.

As a general rule, place strobes above and to the side of subjects, trying



Choose Your Weapon

Basic Camera Systems

	Description	System	Price
LEVEL I Just Havin' Fun	For a diver or snorkeler who wants a simple, fun, easy system at minimum cost for souvenir vacation snapshots, topside and under water.	A single-use Kodachrome or Fujichrome camera with built-in flash in an Ikelite Aquashot housing. Sealife SportDiver. Focus-free continuous-use camera with built-in flash comes in bag housing depth-rated to 60 feet. A step-up is Sealife ReefMaster, automatic 35mm camera and strobe.	Aquashot housing from Ikelite, \$79.95; disposable camera, about \$10. Sealife SportDiver from Pioneer Research, \$99. Sealife ReefMaster \$199.
LEVEL II Gettin' Serious	More sophisticated camera that allows a selection of lenses and the use of a strobe, but which is still intended for fun, not to compete in the publishing marketplace or with serious hobbyists.	Sea & Sea MX-10 and YS 40 strobe. Nikonos V with 35 mm lens and SB-105 strobe.	From Sea & Sea: MX-10, \$413; YS 40 strobe, \$264. From Nikon: the Nikonos V, \$800, 35 mm lens, \$236, and SB-105 strobe, \$820.
LEVEL III Gettin' Published	A range-finder camera for the serious hobbyist and professional, with a wide selection of lenses, excellent optics, a full line of accessories for close-up to wide-angle photography, and the ability to use a variety of strobes.	Nikonos V camera system with 28 mm and 20 mm or 15 mm lens, SB 104 strobe. Also, extension tubes and/or close-up kit, with SB-105 strobe for macro photography. Strobe arms, tray, carrying case. Sea & Sea Motor Marine II-EX kit (camera, YS 50 strobe, tray and arm), 1:3 macro lens, 1:2 macro lens, 20 mm wide-angle lens, 16 mm wide-angle lens, YS 120 strobe, YS 300 strobe and carrying case.	Nikon lenses: 28 mm, \$488, 20 mm, \$960, and 15 mm, \$2,190; SB-105 strobe, \$820. From Sea & Sea: Motor Marine II-EX kit, \$1,120. Motor Marine II-EX camera, \$672, YS 50 strobe (with tray and arm), \$538, YS 120 strobe with sync cord, \$783, YS 300 strobe with sync cord (with battery and charger), \$1,000, 20 mm wide-angle lens, \$355, 16 mm wide-angle lens, \$332, 1:3 macro lens, \$133 and 1:2 macro lens, \$171.
LEVEL IV Sky's the Limit	Top-of-the-line, single lens reflex camera system intended for those photographers who want to get the most out of their 35 mm camera system, and where money is no object.	A housed single lens reflex camera designed for topside use such as, but not limited to, a Nikon N90s, Nikon F4 and Canon EOS 1. A housing made by Aqua Vision, Tussey, Nexus, Subal, Stromm, Ikelite or other manufacturer. A variety of ports to accommodate macro lenses, zoom lenses, and wide-angle lenses. Small, compact strobes for macro photography which allow photographers to work in restricted confines of a reef community. A variety of manual or manual/TTL strobes to select from. Strobe arms, tool kit and carrying case. Wide-angle, multi-featured strobes with variable power settings. Nikonos RS with full complement of lenses (13 mm fish-eye, 20-35 zoom, 28 mm and 50 mm lens), strobe arm, flip tray, SB-104 strobe and carrying case. Sea & Sea SX-1000 package (with housing, flat port, 28-70 mm zoom lens and tray); add a full complement of lenses (24 mm, 50 mm, 90 mm and 180 mm) and dome port. The SX-1000 accepts the full line of Sea & Sea strobes.	Prices vary. From Nikon: Nikonos RS, \$3,550, 13 mm fish-eye, \$2,480, 20-35 zoom, \$3,690, 28 mm lens, \$995, 50 mm lens, \$1,560. From Sea & Sea, SX 1000 package, \$1,680. 24 mm lens, \$532, 50 mm lens, \$579, 90 mm lens, \$784, 180 mm lens, \$932, and 28-70 mm lens, \$383.

not to illuminate the water column—and the particles it contains—directly between the lens and the subject.

TAKING CARE OF IT: A Short Course in Equipment Maintenance

In order to get your shot, your gear needs to function properly. Salt water and electronic components in modern cameras simply don't mix. And frozen or corroded nuts, bolts and joints in strobe arms can be just as

frustrating as flooded gear. Here's how to avoid frustrating and costly equipment disasters.

Pre-dive: Set up camera systems in well-lighted, clean areas by yourself. Use a checklist, especially early on in your career. Check camera, light meter and strobe batteries. Once the camera system is put together, trip the shutter and make sure the strobe fires and the TTL system is functioning properly.

When diving from a boat, put the camera in a designated "camera gear only" area which should be low to or on the deck, in the shade, and secure.

During the dive: Whenever possible, get into the water and get situated, then have someone pass your camera system to you. Immediately look for leaks and for escaping air bubbles, which indicate potential leaks.

After you have been in the water for 20 seconds or so, trip the shutter. If your strobe fires, chances are all is well. If it doesn't fire under water, but it did on land, you may have a leak. If that is the case, get the camera out of the water, dip quickly in a freshwater rinse bucket and examine the system.

Don't try to squeeze one more shot out of the end of a roll of film. If you suspect any problems, jamming or any malfunction, don't force the issue. Deal with mechanical issues on dry land where flooding won't occur.

Post-dive: Whenever possible, dunk your camera system in fresh water immediately following your dive. A quick 30-second dunk and swish, turning knobs and twisting dials to make sure that fresh water gets to all parts of the system, is far better as preventive maintenance than is a long dunk and rinse hours after salt has crystallized on your camera system.

Between dives: When possible, store your camera system in shade at the lowest possible point on a boat so it won't roll off in a swell or get knocked to the deck.

At trip's end, remove strobe connectors from synchronization ports, dry the connectors, clean connector threads, lubricate, and store in a cool, dry place. Remove film and batteries from cameras and dry and lubricate O-rings. Pay attention to manufacturers' recommendations.

About batteries: It's better to change batteries early rather than late. The biggest enemies of rechargeable batteries: allowing them to run completely out of juice, and overcharging them—which overheats the batteries. Ⓢ

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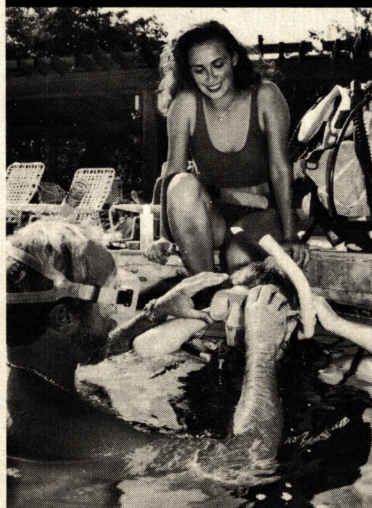
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Tip Talk

We're all taught basically the same things when we learn how to dive—never hold your breath, ascend slowly, keep exposed body parts away from fire coral. But we all know tricks of the trade that you won't find in any open-water manual. Twelve divers offer personal tips to make scuba easier and safer.

Getting Over Your Hang-Ups

On a live-aboard, letting your wetsuit hang dry in the warm breeze lets you look forward to putting it on for the next dive—until the boat gets under way. Now your wetsuit is flapping like a flag and threatening to sail overboard. As usual, it's duct tape to the rescue: Hold two hangers together, their hooks in opposite directions to form a closed loop, then secure the loop with a piece of duct tape. Zip your wetsuit over the hanger and head for the sundeck—it'll be there when you get back.

LOVICK THOMAS
REEF SEEKERS DIVE SHOP
BEVERLY HILLS, FLA.

No More Dangles

To keep your instrument console close at hand and off the reef, bring the console beneath your left arm and through the armhole of your BC to your belly area. If you don't want a hose under your BC, secure the console against the front of your BC with a shoulder strap, chest strap or cummerbund. Bonus: You'll be more trim under water and use less air.

CLAYTON S. FULLER
AQUA TECH DIVE SHOP
VISTA, CALIF.

Stealth Divers

Why travel thousands of miles to see creatures below the waves only to frighten them away when you giant-stride off the boat and splash in the water with 40 pounds of equipment on? Watch the stealth divers—usually good photographers. When conditions permit, they sneak down the dive ladder, float on the surface while donning their fins, then ease below with as little movement as possible. Their quiet entry often pays off with pictures of critters who



We turn the classroom over to the most experienced group of divers we know: Our readers.

weren't scared off by the sonic boom of giant-striding divers.

PAUL PETTENNUDE
CUTLER RIDGE DIVING CENTER
MIAMI, FLA.

Speed Up Your Slow Ears

As a once- or twice-a-year vacation diver, I would always experience some trouble clearing on the first dive of the trip, even though I would begin clearing at the surface and descend slowly. Now I begin gently clearing the night before, using the pinched nose or Valsalva technique. My ears start getting used to the procedure and I'm reassured that my eustachian tubes are ready to go.

JIM ARMILLOTTI
ORCHARD PARK, N.Y.

Don't Get Mad, Get Glad

Sometimes trying to wriggle bare feet down the legs of a damp, tight-fitting wetsuit can be frustrating and exhausting, especially on a warm day and rocking dive boat. All you need is a medium-sized freezer bag. I like the tough Glads. Place the bag over your foot and slide it easily down the neoprene. The bags work for hands, too. And if a hand or foot gets stuck, remember to pull at the place where the suit is stuck, not too far above it.

STUART ATTWOOD
DIVER'S DEN
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Oh, Baby!

Talk about versatility: A bottle of baby shampoo can serve multiple purposes on a dive trip: mask defogger, hair and body soap, lubricant for too-tight gloves, even detergent for hand laundry. For a convenient mask defogger on a dive boat, pry the tip off a bottle of eyedrops or swimmer's-ear drops, clean thoroughly and you'll have an effective, one-drop-at-a-time dispenser for your baby shampoo defogger.

LOTTIE O'MALLEY
WESTBANK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Does Your Mask Fit Your Mouth?

Does your mask still leak, even though it passed the sniff test in the dive store? Because it affects the shape of your lower face, your second stage mouthpiece may be the culprit. Try the mask on with

ELLIOTT PARK

the regulator in your mouth. Does the mask skirt still provide a good seal? Other potential leak spots: smile lines next to your nose and squint lines next to your eyes. A mask's inner skirt should lie behind the eye sockets, even if you're smiling at a great white.

SAMUEL R. WHEATMAN
UNDERWATER CONNECTION
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.

Jaws of Life

Most divers never really know how their octopus will perform until they need it—when it may be too late. A simple solution: Get in the habit of switching to your octopus during the safety hang at the end of your dive. One day your buddy may be glad you did.

NORMAN COOTER
SMOKY MOUNTAIN DIVERS
JEFFERSON CITY, TENN.

A Spear Tip

Forget to remove a speartip for cleaning after a dive and it can rust on amazingly quickly. The forgetful hunter should apply teflon tape in a clockwise rotation to the spear shaft's threaded end. The tip will come off easily days, weeks, even months later.

CHARLES E. MCDANIEL
SPRUCE CREEK SCUBA
PORT ORANGE, FLA.

The Magic Frame

Photo pros recommend that you always save one unexposed frame for that once-in-a-lifetime photo op just as the dive is ending. But just in case the whale shark doesn't happen by during your safety stop, you can still use that extra frame. After the dive, write on a slate or piece of paper key things you want to remember about the dive—conditions, subjects, exposure settings, film roll number—then photograph it with the remaining frame. This will keep relevant info with its roll of film and provide a list that won't get lost, wet or put with the wrong film canister.

BOB KAUFMAN
DIVEALOT SPORTS
BECKLEY, W. VA.

Night-Light

Ever have trouble finding the anchor line at the end of a night dive? Try taking down a white plastic bucket with a few feet of line tied to its handle. Attach the bucket to the anchor, "inflate" the bucket with your octopus as you would a lift bag, and leave a

glow stick or dive light inside it. Voilà—your own private lighthouse at the bottom of the sea.

JOHN BOND
DIVERS UNLIMITED
HOLLYWOOD, FLA.

Access Denied

Many times, dive bags and camera cases sport the brightly colored logos of their manufacturers—a

clear signal to airport thieves that expensive, easy-to-fence items are inside. Solutions: Use tape to conceal the logos or pack your gear in nondescript bags and cases. Save the dive bag for the boat. Most important, always secure a bag's zippers with locks, plastic lock-ties or tape—anything to delay a thief.

DAVE LENZI
THE DIVE SHOP
FENTON, MICH.

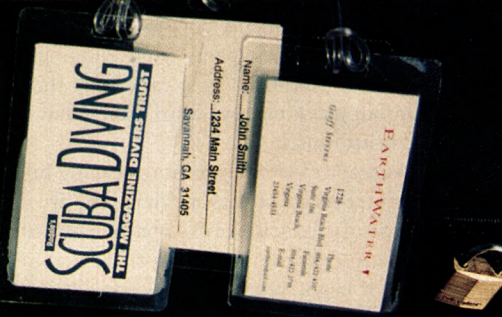
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Heart of the Matter

By Samuel Shelanski, M.D.

Dozens of you have written to ask whether it's OK to continue diving after being diagnosed with hypertension and heart disease. While I can't answer every letter in print, I have tried to address most of your concerns in my answers to these letters.



I am 59 years old and recently certified. I have a history of mild hypertension. Is there a level of recreational diving at which even us oldies can participate without too much concern? The sort of diving that I tend to do is on shallow reefs at about 35 feet, for no more than 40 minutes.

I understand that if I wanted to dive to the limits of the tables, I would need frequent checkups and would be taking a real risk. But I had assumed that my "trivial" dives were putting me at no greater risk than snorkeling or jogging.

PETER G. SMITH
via e-mail



Two separate issues raised in your letter need to be addressed. The first of these is your hypertension, and the second concerns what you call "trivial" dives.

Hypertension affects whether a person can dive because it is a risk factor for coronary artery disease. For this reason, I recommend that all hypertensives, and anyone over the age of 45, have annual physicals to ensure their fitness to dive. In addition, anyone with two or more of the cardiac risk factors described in "Risk Factors To Learn by Heart" (see page 99) should have an annual exercise stress test to make sure that they can exercise to a sufficiently high level to participate safely in diving. An acceptable, or satisfactory, result on a treadmill exercise stress test means that the person is able to complete at least six minutes of the standard Bruce protocol without chest discomfort or significant electrocardiographic (EKG) changes that would indicate coronary artery disease.

The type of medication prescribed to treat your hypertension must be factored into the decision. Of particular concern is the class of medications known as beta-blockers, which can limit your ability to achieve the level of conditioning necessary in an emergency situation, and diuretics, which can dehydrate you and increase the risk of DCS.

Another concern is the type of diving you do. While it is certainly true that the type of diving you describe is less strenuous, and probably less dangerous than diving in cold water or swift currents, there is still some risk. Every dive must be considered

The scuba doc answers all your questions about diving and heart disease.

potentially strenuous. You must have a sufficient amount of physical reserve beyond what the planned dive requires in order to cope with unexpected situations or changing environmental conditions. For this reason, I require divers to demonstrate that their hearts can handle more than the minimum amount of necessary exercise before I clear them for diving.

See your doctor, have a physical and an exercise stress test, and if you're cleared to dive, continue diving as you have.



I had cardiac bypass surgery eight months ago and feel fine. Is there any reason why I shouldn't dive?

BOB PENKO
EUCLID, OHIO



Heeding a few caveats, you can still dive after cardiac surgery, though the decision depends largely upon the extent of the coronary artery disease and the amount of damage to your heart prior to surgery. A person diagnosed with heart disease after experiencing chest pains while running is far more likely to be a suitable post-op diving candidate than someone whose first symptom was a massive heart attack that destroyed a large amount of heart muscle.

After your surgeon declares you fit to resume full activities, take an exercise stress test to ensure that you are capable of achieving a satisfactory exercise level to participate safely in diving. If you're able to exercise well, then there's no reason that you can't resume, or begin, scuba diving.



I recently underwent open-heart surgery for aortic regurgitation and had my aortic valve replaced. I am 40 years old and am an advanced diver. My surgeon told me that I can return to my normal activities; however, although he was not personally opposed to my diving, he recommended that I consult someone more knowledgeable.

I do not have any medical problems other than the valve replacement. The only medication that I take is 7.5 mg of Coumadin daily. Can I dive?

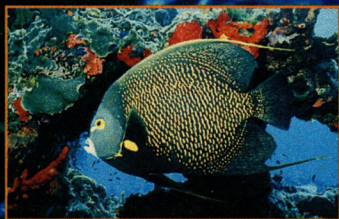
MARK NEVINS
via e-mail



Many of the issues that apply to cardiac bypass surgery also apply to you. However, there are certain aspects of your surgery that complicate the matter.

There are no absolute con- (Continued on page 99)

A DIVER'S GUIDE TO COZUMEL



BY ROB CURRAN



Cozumel offers a dizzying array of options for diving. Ditto for accommodations, dining, exploring and fun. How does a consumer sort through Cozumel's choices for dive vacation Nirvana? It's simple: Know your destination, and know what you want.

A Quick Geography Lesson • The Yucatan Channel separates Cozumel from mainland Mexico. Warm currents course through the channel, bringing nutrients and species from the ocean. The currents also cleanse the waters. Underwater visibility is startling—150 feet is common; 200 feet is not unusual.

San Miguel—the main town on Cozumel—is located on the west coast of the island, as are most resorts and dive operations. San Miguel (a.k.a. downtown and el centro) is the dividing point for the northern and southern hotel zones.

The Cozumel Underwater Park stretches from downtown to the southern tip of the island. Ninety-nine percent of the diving is conducted in the park off Cozumel's southwest quadrant. Inside the

park lie some of the most magnificent reefs and sheer walls in the world. Imagine diving the Grand Canyon with clear water and brilliant coral and fish. That's what it's like to dive Cozumel.

Selecting Dive Operators & Resorts •

We can divide Cozumel dive operations and resorts into several loose categories with some basic criteria.

"Big boats" versus "fast boats." The boats of Cozumel dive operators tend to fall into two categories: "big-and-slower" and "small-and-fast." Big boats are inboard-powered; they can accommodate 12 divers or more. Six-pack-type fast boats are outboard-powered; they accommodate one divemaster and six to eight passengers. There are exceptions: A dive boat can be big and fast. And some dive operators run both big and fast boats.

Bring a large group to Cozumel, and you may need a big boat. Another option: divide your group into sub-groups of six to eight by interests or ability, then put each small group on its own fast boat.

If you're traveling solo or with a small group, a fast boat may be the ticket. You spend less time traveling to and from the reefs.

With our North American obsession with fast-faster-fastest, we sometimes forget to slow down and savor the entire dive experience. On slower boats you have time to make new friends and socialize. (Divers and your Cozumel hosts are a congenial lot.) On big vessels, you also have room to spread out, get some sun (or avoid it), and prepare photography equipment. Big boats sometimes carry two dive guides. If you're apprehensive about your first experience with Cozumel-style drift diving, consider a big boat with multiple in-water divemasters.

One tank or two. In Cozumel, some dive operators near the reefs offer one-tank dives three or four times a day. Other operators farther away offer two-tank trips with both morning and afternoon departures. Some offer three-tank trips. If you get up at the crack of dawn, you can dive three tanks before noon with one outfit.

One operator on the Yucatan Peninsula offers underwater cave and cavern diving, two-tank charters to Cozumel, and trips to the reefs that line the mainland.

If you want freedom to alter your daily dive routine, go with an operator that offers a broad menu of options.

Near reefs or near town. The dive operations and resorts near the southern tip of Cozumel are closest to the reefs; dock-to-reef can take 10 to 15 minutes. Interested in reducing boat time? Do you want to make repeat trips to advanced, southernmost dive sites such as Colombia, Maracaibo and Punta Sur (South Point). Then check out the southern resorts.

The farther south your home-base resort, the more difficult it is to appreciate downtown Cozumel. El centro boasts countless options for fun, entertainment, dining and late-night carousing. Taxis to town from the north hotel zone are cheap and fast (US\$2 to \$3 and 5 to 10 minutes). From southernmost resorts, a taxi to el centro for up to four passengers can cost up to US\$10 to \$14 and take 25 to 30 minutes each way. Fares drop sharply as you approach town. Distance from town may not be an issue if you rent a car, are happy with the options for entertainment and dining at your resort, or are content with just a visit or two to el centro.

Other Tips • Call several dive travel specialists for advice on Cozumel. Ask your dive operator for a welcome tank. Check buoy-

ancy and brush up on your skills with a beach dive before you take the big plunge.

Beach diving and snorkeling are fantastic. Ask your divemaster for recommendations on coral gardens. Some packages include tanks for shore dives.

Consider continuing diver education. Take an advanced or specialty course. Cozumel now offers PADI Instructor Development Courses several times a year.

You can save money on resort and diving packages, especially in late summer and early fall.

Don't be afraid to trot out your high school Spanish. The locals will respond warmly to your efforts.

Get out of the tourist areas and meet the local people, even if you don't speak Spanish. Although they may appear shy at first, Cozumeleños are some of the friendliest people in the world. Approach them with courtesy.

Develop an appreciation of everyday life in Cozumel by poking around behind the main square. You'll find a Catholic church, a lively market and scores of restaurants and cafes where

you can sample local foods at local prices.

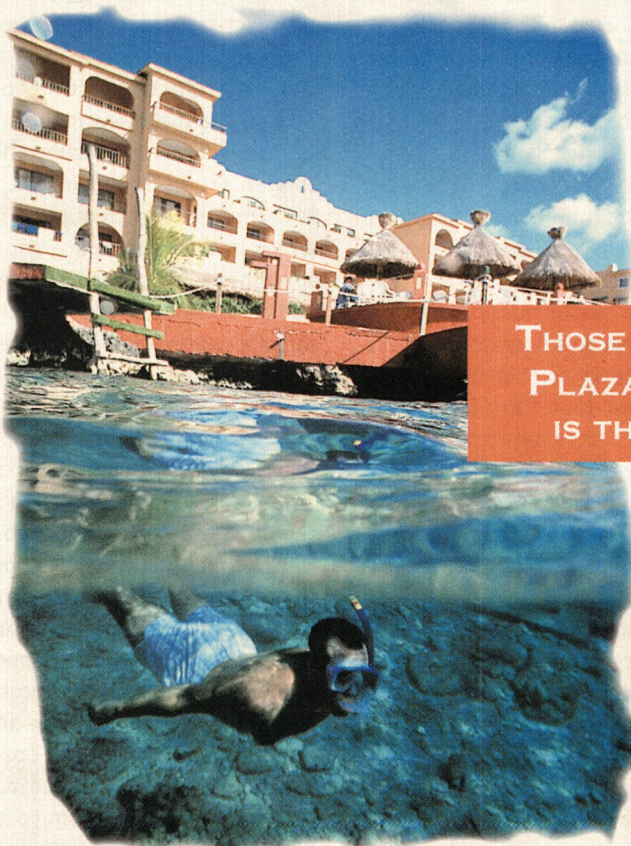
Learn about the Mayas. Don't miss the Cozumel Museum. It's a treasure trove of natural history, ecology, and archeology. Admission is a well-spent US\$3.

Rent a car and take a trip around the island. The east coast of the island is beautiful and deserted.

Leave time for OTD: Other Than Diving. Don't rush—there's always mañana. If you run out of mañanas on this trip, Cozumel will welcome you back time and time again.



Dive Tours offers special packages with Plaza Las Glorias and Aqua Safari pictured here.



THOSE WHO KNOW SAY
PLAZA LAS GLORIAS
IS THE WAY TO GO.

GIVE YOURSELF A VACATION TO DIVE FOR.

You will enjoy Plaza Las Glorias spacious junior suites with full ocean view only a 20 minute boat ride to Palancar and surrounding reefs.

For above water adventure, the Plaza Las Glorias is the closest 5-star resort to the island's main tourist plaza.

Aqua Safari's modern fleet will take you to Cozumel's most breathtaking depths. Experience the spectacular marine life and coral reefs, while diving with Cozumel's most professional and fully bilingual dive guides.



Plaza Las Glorias
Cozumel
HOTEL & VILLAS

CIRCLE NO. 90 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Aqua Safari
29TH ANNIVERSARY



800-433-0885

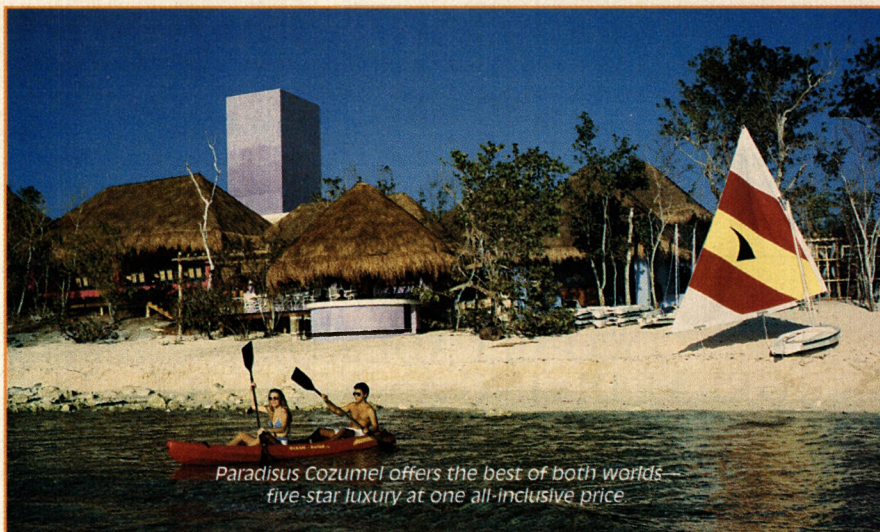
CIRCLE NO. 83 ON READER SERVICE CARD

AQUA SAFARI • Celebrating 30 years of continuous service, Aqua Safari is known for its excellent bilingual divemasters, state of the art dive boats and its safety record. This pioneer in Cozumel sport diving is a PADI 5-Star Facility and Instructor Development Center with two locations — in town and at the luxurious Plaza Las Glorias Hotel.

PLAZA LAS GLORIAS • This five-star beachfront hotel is only a 5-minute walk to the center of town and boasts 168 junior suites, master suites and duplex penthouses all with ocean views. Along with its on-site dive operation, Plaza Las Glorias has three restaurants, a boutique, swimming pool and jacuzzi and various watersports.

DIVE TOURS • Dive Tours offers a special package with Plaza Las Glorias and Aqua Safari which includes 7 nights and 5 days of diving for \$599. This price includes a free night. Mention *Rodale's* ad and you'll receive a FreeStyle dive watch FREE! 800-433-0885

PARADISUS COZUMEL • (formerly Melia Mayan Paradisus) This five-star, all-inclusive resort is perfect for divers and their families. You won't have to con-



Paradise Cozumel offers the best of both worlds — five-star luxury at one all-inclusive price

cern yourself with cost because Paradisus offers everything for one inclusive price. Amenities and activities include a children's program, sports program, horseback riding and a delicious selection of food and international beverages in its three restaurants — plus the best of Cozumel diving with Caribbean Divers.

The Paradisus Cozumel has 200 rooms with garden and ocean views, full

bathrooms, direct dial telephones and cable television. Other features of the resort include two pools, tennis courts, complete gym, game room and access to Paradisus Dive and Beach Club.

Special dive and non-diver packages are available until December 21, 1996. Prices start at \$340 including three nights, two dive days and all-inclusive hotel facilities. Children stay and eat free. Call 800-341-5993 for more information.

in whatever language

it's paradise

Welcome to Paradisus, our 5-star luxury resort located on the loveliest beach in Cozumel. This being paradise, you'll never have to concern yourself with quality or cost. Paradisus offers the finest of everything for one inclusive price. The amenities are first-class and our recreation goes far beyond watersports and tennis, featuring horseback riding, a complete gym, a game room, nightly shows and kid's club. And the only tip you'll give is to tell your friends about Paradisus.

Paradisus
All Inclusive
Isla de Cozumel, Mexico.

For reservations and information call your professional Travel Consultant or
1-800-336-3542
Sabre ME, System One ME
For Groups, call 1-800-446-3542

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club
Paradisus

ISLA DE COZUMEL, MEXICO

"Far from noise... Close to Mother Nature".
Cozumel's first real Beach and Dive Club.

Opening January 1996
For more information call:
52 (987) 20411

LA CEIBA BEACH & DIVE RESORT •

Located on the beach, La Ceiba is a full service resort with two restaurants, a pool, jacuzzi, tennis, sauna and billiards. Diving is arranged through Del Mar Aquatics on-site.

CASA DEL MAR HOTEL • Located across the street from the beach, Casa del

Mar is a dedicated diver's resort with two restaurants, pool, hot tub and on-site dive shop, Del Mar Aquatics.

DEL MAR AQUATICS • Features of Del Mar Aquatics include a fleet of five dive boats, a private pier, gear storage and lockers and all levels of certifications.

TROPICAL TOURS •

Tropical Tours offers a "Yucatanza" inclusive package with La Ceiba or Casa del Mar. La Ceiba/ 7 nights/5 days boat diving \$499. Casa del Mar, \$429. Prices are good September 1 to December 20, 1996. 800-711-4700



Tropical Tours "Yucatanza" clients can choose from La Ceiba or the smaller Casa del Mar located across the street.

GALAPAGO INN • Galapago Inn prides itself on reasonably priced packages, a convenient location, comfortable rooms, good food and a friendly staff. Sixty Spanish-Colonial tiled rooms offer ocean views, terraces, air conditioning and refrigerators. An on-site dive operator

COZUMEL, MEXICO

TWO DECADES OF GREAT DIVING AND SERVICE

1976-1996

For twenty years the Galapago Inn and Scuba Cozumel have been THE place for sport scuba divers to meet and enjoy the very best diving in Cozumel.

Come and Celebrate with us!



Galapago Inn
DIVE RESORT • MEXICO



For Information • U.S.A. & Canada
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Cozumel

YUCATANZA™

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(713) 855-6900

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TM

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Wholesale Dive Travel Specialists

Hotel Accommodations
Breakfast Daily Per Person
10% Discount Food & Beverage
Per Room
Boat Diving & Shore Diving
Rental Car 1 Day
Ground Transfers
Hotel Taxes
Yucatanza T-Shirt

Prices Per Person/Double Occupancy/Diver.
Non-Diver Rates Available.
Single/Triples Rates Upon Request.
Valid U.S. Drivers License Required For
Rental Car.
Valid C-Card Required For Diving.
Restrictions May Apply.
Price Subject To Change.

4 Nights

\$269



5 Days/4 Nights
3 Days Boat Diving
9/1/96 - 12/20/96

\$309

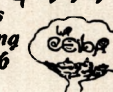


\$429



7 Nights

\$499



8 Days/7 Nights
5 Days Boat Diving
9/1/96 - 12/20/96



Galapago Inn and its on-site dive operation, Scuba Cozumel

makes Galapago Inn an excellent spot for a convenient and relaxing dive vacation. One open-air and one air-conditioned restaurant, a freshwater swimming pool, hammocks, kayak rentals and nearby shops complete the Galapago experience. The 7-night package includes five days of diving, three meals daily, and unlimited beach diving for \$622 pp/do. 1-800-847-5708

FIESTA INN COZUMEL • Being close to Cozumel's best reefs and close to downtown makes Fiesta Inn a convenient choice for dive vacationers. This 180-room inn has a cafe and waterfront restaurant,

tennis court, jacuzzi and the largest swimming pool in Cozumel. Other Fiesta Inn activities include scooter and bike rental, glass bottom boat tours, deep sea fishing, windsurfing and sailing.

DIVE PARADISE • Dive Paradise is known for its personalized and professional service and safety measures. Their fleet of ten dive boats, between 27 and 42 feet,

visit all Cozumel dive sites. Dive Paradise also offers unlimited shore diving and PADI, NAUI, CMAS, SSI and NASDS certifications plus computer and Nitrox diving.

Fiesta Inn Cozumel and Dive Paradise have combined to offer a special dive package — 7 nights, 5 two-tank and 4 single tank dives for \$495 pp/do. This price is good through December 19, 1996. 800-308-5125



After diving with Dive Paradise, Fiesta Inn guests can enjoy the largest pool on Cozumel.

Dive Paradise &

SUPER PROMOTIONAL PACKAGES!
(4/14-12/19/96, other restrictions apply.)

Cozumel's best dollar value! Dive Paradise has provided the best variety of trips, boats, and service for over 12 years. 3-tank boat diving days still only \$59; early a.m. "Cock-A-Doodle" dives for experienced divers. Fiesta Inn, a spectacular hotel, is located across from its own beach and is close to dive sites and downtown.

4 nights/3 two-tank & 2 single tank dives;
Only \$297...\$407 value

7 nights/5 two-tank & 4 single tank dives;
Only \$495...\$715 value



CALL FOR INFO/RESERVATIONS



1-800-308-5125

FIESTA INN

COZUMEL DIRECT 011-52-987-21007
COZUMEL FAX 011-52-987-21061/25161/22900

Fiesta in Cozumel!

COZUMEL... SO NEAR YET WORLDS APART!

Cozumel Equalizers, Fiesta Inn, and Reef & Rainforest are working together to offer you...

The Best of Cozumel!

**COZUMEL
EQUALIZERS
SCUBA CENTER**

4 night/3 dive day package from \$282!

7 night/5 dive day package from \$481!

Includes 2 tank boat dive, tax, complimentary check out beach dive per person based on double occupancy.

Enjoy uncrowded, personalized service with 6-7 divers on a boat, longer bottom time & the most professional dive masters in Cozumel. **Call Today**



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800/794-9RNR

Fax 415/289-1763 E-mail: mrtravel@aol.com
Internet: <http://www.reefrainfrst.com>

CIRCLE NO. 92 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Islands Dreams offers special packages with Dive House and the 5-star Fiesta Americana.

COZUMEL EQUALIZERS • Cozumel Equalizers' fast boats carry up to seven divers allowing you more flexibility and custom itineraries. Services include two-tank morning or afternoon dives, night diving, nitrox diving and reef trips to the "other side" of the island.

REEF & RAINFOREST • Reef & Rainforest Worldwide Adventure Travel offers a special package with Cozumel Equalizers and Fiesta Inn. 7 nights with a two-tank boat dive per day for 5 days is \$481pp/do. 800-794-9767

FIESTA AMERICANA COZUMEL REEF •

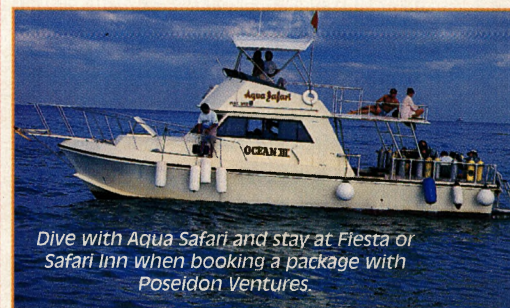
This five-star luxury hotel features 162 ocean-

front rooms, an exclusive beach club, two restaurants, three bars, lighted tennis court and Dive House, the on-site dive center.

DIVE HOUSE • Dive House is an experienced and diver-friendly operation with some of the largest and fastest boats on the island — yet still

carrying no more than 12 divers per boat.

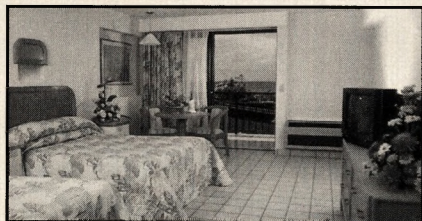
ISLAND DREAMS • Island Dreams Travel offers several packages with Fiesta Americana and Dive House, one of which includes 5 nights and 3 days diving for \$419 pp/do. 800-346-6116



Dive with Aqua Safari and stay at Fiesta or Safari Inn when booking a package with Poseidon Ventures.

COZUMEL for WINNERS

~ Dive & Stay with the Best! ~



Cozumel's Best Day Boats
CIRCLE NO. 81 ON READER SERVICE

**FIESTA AMERICANA
COZUMEL REEF**

Cozumel's Highest
Rated Resort
Best Staff

Top 10 Best Value
CIRCLE NO. 85 ON READER SERVICE

3 night package

from \$229 pp/do

Includes two days of 2-tank boat diving, tax, and complimentary beach tank for your check-out dive.

7 night package

from \$549 pp/do

Includes five days of 2-tank boat diving, tax, and complimentary beach tank for your check-out dive.



800-346-6116

ph: 713-973-8585 fax: 713-973-8585

E-mail: info@islanddream.com

<http://www.islanddream.com/island/index.htm>

CIRCLE NO. 88 ON READER SERVICE CARD

COZUMEL 3 TANK SUPER SPECIALS

*Aqua Safari's 30th Anniversary Gift
"Now available for 4 to 7 Nights"*

3 Tanks/Day Special FIESTA & SAFARI INN'S

4 Night Pkg \$228-\$294

Incl: 3 Days of 2 Tank Dives
and 2 One Tank PM Trips.

Unlimited Air for Bch Tanks

7 Night Pkg \$382-\$495

Incl: 5 Days of 2 Tank Dives
and 4 one Tank PM trips

Unlimited Air for Bch Tanks

Aqua SafariSafari InnFiesta Inn

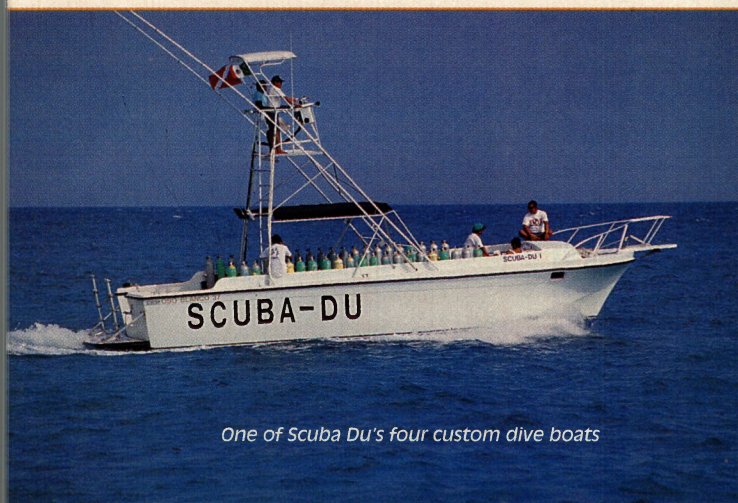
5 and 6 Night Pkg Prices on request!!!

**Poseidon Partnership
in Quality**

Poseidon Ventures Tours

800-854-9334

CIRCLE NO. 91 ON READER SERVICE CARD



One of Scuba Du's four custom dive boats

POSEIDON VENTURES TOURS •

Poseidon Ventures Tours books accommodations and diving at many Cozumel hotels, resorts and dive operations. Special packages now being offered include three dives a day with Aqua Safari with accommodations at Fiesta Inn or Safari Inn; three dives a day at Dive Paradise with lodging at Hotel Barracuda; or, pay for four or more nights at Plaza Las Glorias and get one night free. Poseidon Ventures specializes in booking dive

travel to more than 23 destinations.
800-854-9334

SCUBA DU • Safety, proximity to the reefs, personal attention, small groups, custom boats and a dive schedule in which divers never repeat a dive — these are the hallmarks of Scuba Du. Their four dive boats offer two-tank dives in the morning and afternoon and night diving on request. Scuba Du offers both PADI and NAUI courses. A special package is

Another package offered by Dive Tours includes a stay at the island-style Diamond Resort.



offered with the Presidente InterContinental. The package includes 7 days, 6 boat dives, breakfast and a welcome beach dive for \$1253 pp/do. Hotel reservations call 800-327-0200. Scuba Du phone 011-987-2-03-22 (ext. 4109).

DIAMOND RESORT • Diamond Resort is a 300-room, five-star beachfront resort. Amenities include two restaurants, a fruit bar, two pools, a jacuzzi, four tennis courts and an on-site dive operation.

Cozumel, Mexico



Scuba Du



Daily Dive Trips
morning, afternoon
and night dives
Small Groups
Fast Custom Dive Boats
Experienced Divemaster
PADI and NAUI Instructions
All Levels/Referrals Welcome
Hotel/Dive Packages Available

**Join The Professionals
and enjoy the best service
on the Island !**

Call Now!



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P.O. Box 137, Cozumel, Q. Roo 77600 México

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We've been recognized!



The secret is out. Rodale's annual readers survey listed **Dive Palancar** in their top 100 and recognized the **Diamond Resort** in Cozumel as one of the 10 best dive travel buys in the world. It's official. Great diving, great food, great drink, great location. **ALL INCLUSIVE.**

FROM \$399 PER PERSON

Call today and ask about our new Spring Group Special.



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CIRCLE NO. 84 ON READER SERVICE CARD

DIVE PALANCAR • Dive Palancar is the PADI 5 Star Center at Diamond Resort. Five dive trips a day (plus a night dive) and six roomy boats mean more opportunities to dive and no big crowds. Average boat time is only eight minutes.

DIVE TOURS • Dive Tours offers a special package with Diamond and Dive Palancar including 7 nights, 5 days of diving, food, drinks, activities and non-motorized watersports for \$922 pp/do. Mention *Rodale's* ad and receive a FreeStyle dive watch FREE! 800-433-0885

BLUE BUBBLE DIVERS • With a fleet of four dive boats carrying six to ten divers, Blue Bubble promises "no trouble." Two-tank morning and afternoon dives are scheduled daily with night diving on request. PADI courses are available from Discover Scuba to Assistant Instructor and Nitrox plus IANTD Nitrox Basic, Advanced and Deep Air. Blue Bubble offers a special package through Hotel Aguilar which includes 6 days, four two-tank boat dives and one night dive for \$297 pp/do. 800-878-8853

HOTEL BARRACUDA • Located on the beach just five blocks from downtown, Hotel Barracuda is a small, friendly, comfortable hotel with an excellent on-site dive operation — Dive Paradise. The 51 rooms feature private terraces overlooking the ocean, two double beds, a refrigerator and air conditioning. Amenities include a restaurant, private pier and watersports including scuba diving, fishing, windsurfing, parasailing, jet skiing and motorcycle rental. Prices from now until December 15 are \$55 pp/do and \$79 pp/do from December 16, 1996 through April 15, 1997. 011-52-987-21243

CROWN PRINCESS SOL CARIBE • Crown Princess Sol Caribe is a newly renovated beachfront hotel located about four miles south of San Miguel. Hotel services include three restaurants and snack bars, a boutique, tennis, pool and fitness center. The on-site dive center, Aqua World, has a dock, rinse tanks and lockers. Two-tank dives run \$50 and shore snorkeling is free. Room rates range from \$70 per night in low season to \$120 a night in high season. 011-52-987-20700

The following dive travel wholesalers service Cozumel and supported this special advertising section:

Dive Tours
800-433-0885



Island Dreams Travel
800-346-6116



Poseidon Ventures Tours
800-854-9334



Reef & Rainforest
800-794-9767



Tropical Tours
800-711-4700

Blue Bubble... No Trouble!



A well known fast boat operation since 1988 is now offering IANTD EANx courses to all levels. EANx guided trips, technical deep air, cave and cavern dives, guided tours to Cozumel & Mainland. This while continuing to offer our popular two and three tank fast trips a.m. and p.m. daily. Complete air, dive & hotel packages, multi day dive discounts.

E-Mail BLUBUB@AOL.COM

Fax/Tel in Cozumel: (987) 21865

IN USA: 800-878-8853

**BLUE
BUBBLE
DIVERS**

CIRCLE NO. 80 ON READER SERVICE CARD

A different hotel on the beach...



A Paradise for Scuba Divers.

HOTEL BARRACUDA, COZUMEL

Our intimate size & location makes us a mecca for both first-time divers and veterans and a favorite for groups.

- On-site fully equipped dive shop & pier.
- Clean, comfortable rooms.
- Cozumel's Best Value Resort.
- Private Terrace Balconies.

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FAX 011 52 (987) 2-08-84
P.O. Box 163, Cozumel, Q.R. Mexico
or Your Travel Agency



"A superb hotel that divers can really sink their teeth into."

CIRCLE NO. 87 ON READER SERVICE CARD

DIVE COZUMEL

\$310

All-Inclusive
3 Night-2 Day
Dive Package

**GRAND CLUB
DIVING
PROGRAM**

*Crown Princess
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**Other Fine Resorts
Available in:**

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- Akumal • Nassau
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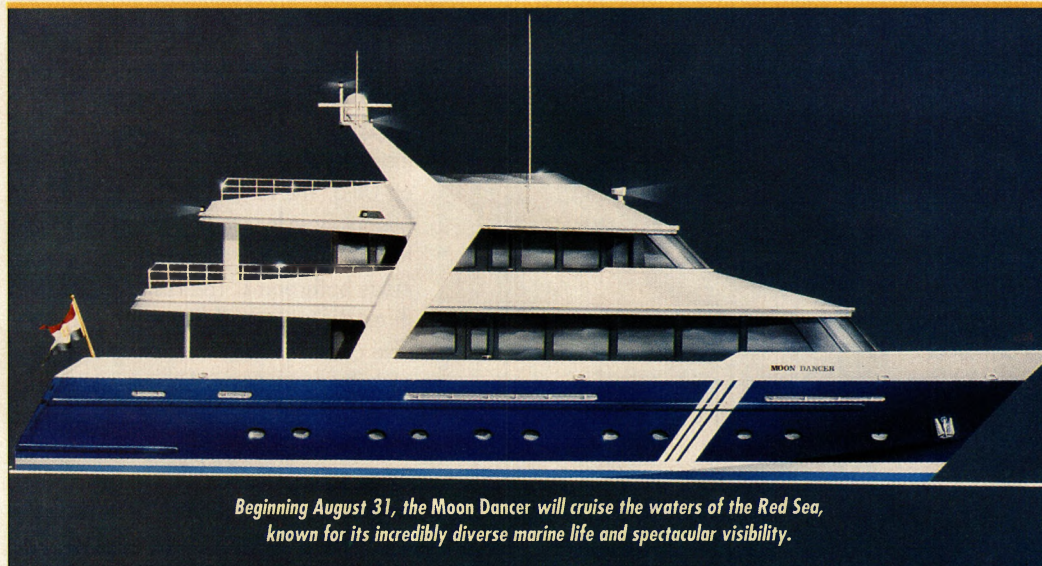
Special Airfare Available!

Ask about our **EXCLUSIVE
DIVER MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM**

CIRCLE NO. 86 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Peter Hughes' Moon Dancer

THE CLASS ACT IN THE RED SEA



Beginning August 31, the Moon Dancer will cruise the waters of the Red Sea, known for its incredibly diverse marine life and spectacular visibility.

The Egyptian Red Sea topped the lists of the 1996 Rodale's Scuba Diving Readers' Choice Awards. Sharm El Sheikh scored 13th in favorite experiences worldwide. No wonder divers call Ras Mohammad "The Mother of All Wall Dives": readers rated it number one in fish life and wall diving in the Indo-Pacific, and number five in healthiest reefs and best wreck diving. Reveals Peter Hughes, "Red Sea diving is first-class. The marine life is among the most prolific I've seen in my 30 years of diving the world's oceans. The Red Sea deserves its designation as one of the Seven Wonders of The Underwater World."

Are you holding out for the right combination of adventure and quality service in Red Sea diving? Wait no more—the M/V *Moon Dancer* has arrived.

Over the years, Peter Hughes' *Dancer* boats have topped the worldwide RSD charts in a host of "best" categories: live-aboards, dive staff and food. *Moon Dancer* is no different. Peter is personally committed to raising the bar for live-aboard diving in the Red Sea. From *Moon Dancer*, expect legendary scuba itineraries, Peter Hughes' trademark service, and attention to divers' favorite details.

A HEADY EXPERIENCE ▶ The new 20-passenger *Moon Dancer* is 105 feet of Peter Hughes class and comfort. Throughout the boat—including state-rooms—eight-foot ceilings provide unparalleled living space and headroom for even the tallest of divers. All cabins feature private shower, toilet and individual controls for air conditioning and music. Large picture windows offer superb views from the four suites on the Lido deck.

RED SEA: LET'S GO ▶ Peter Hughes' attention to detail is evident in the itinerary he's crafted for travelers from North America. Late Friday evening, leave New York on Egypt Air and arrive Hurghada, Egypt on Saturday afternoon. Board *Moon Dancer* for six days of unforgettable diving in the Red Sea. Make four to five dives daily, including night dives. Next Saturday morning, bid farewell to *Moon Dancer* and fly to Cairo to experience the famed Museum of Antiquities. Ancient history comes alive as an Egyptologist explains the secrets of the lavish King Tut collection. In the afternoon, tour the Pyramids and Sphinx. Saturday night enjoy free time to explore Cairo after checking into the Airport Hotel. On Sunday morning Egypt Air whisks you back to New York. Arrive JFK in the early afternoon on Sunday with

plenty of time to make connecting flights to your final destination.

The *Moon Dancer* offers three different Red Sea diving itineraries: north, south and deep south. The north and south cruises originate at the *Moon Dancer* base in the resort town of Hurghada. The deep south cruises begin at the base in Al Qu'Sir.

BOOK IT ▶ Eight-night cruises are \$2,395 pp/do; ten-night cruises, \$2,995. Airfare not included. For reservations and information, contact Peter Hughes Diving, your dive travel specialist or travel agent. Peter Hughes Diving: phone (800) 9-DANCER (932-6237) or (305) 669-9391. Fax (305) 669 9475. E-mail: <dancer@winnet.net>. Web: <<http://www.winnet.net/dancer/>>.

—Text by Rob Curran

MOON DANCER FEATURES

- Peter Hughes' personal commitment to outstanding diving, comfort, service, cleanliness, food and beverage.
- Ten roomy cabins for 20 passengers.
- Spacious lounge and dining area with panoramic view from three sides.
- Sun deck with chaise lounges, hammocks and shade.
- Air conditioning and ultraviolet-purified water throughout.
- Large dive deck four short steps from dive platform.
- Specialty scuba instruction.
- Nitrox and Draeger rebreather diving and courses.
- E-6 processing
- VHS and 8mm editing
- 34-inch video screen
- Rentals: scuba gear and Nikons and underwater video cameras.

Laguna Beach Resort

SHINING STAR OF UTILA HOSPITALITY AND LUXURY

I got a royal welcome at Laguna Beach Resort in Utila, the kind normally reserved for a visiting monarch. Convinced I was getting "the show" reserved for dive writers, I noticed something that impressed me: The other guests were receiving the same royal pampering.

Our hosts took great delight in sharing the wonders and charms of their magic kingdom, both topside and under water. Guests sensed that the we-aim-to-please philosophy of the staff is a genuine attitude that imbues every aspect of the resort: diving, accommodations, meals and service.

Owner Troy Bodden guided us around the entire island via boat and all-terrain vehicle. One evening, an hour before sunset, Troy took us out in his motor yacht to spy on the whale sharks



that school off Utila. *Rhincodon typus* didn't show, but we weren't disappointed: a dozen dolphins frolicked in the bow wake for 10 minutes.

General manager David Adams often gives insights from his 10 years in the Bay Islands. Experienced local dive-masters share their knowledge and unabashed love of Utila's pristine reefs

and prolific sea life.

Laguna Beach Resort nestles in tropical splendor on a private peninsula. It's the newest and most luxurious dive resort on Utila. The large waterside rooms are bungalow-style with outside decks, ceiling fans, optional air-conditioning and spacious bathrooms. The restaurant serves three delicious buffet meals a day. The dive center offers two morning dives and one afternoon dive a day, two night dives a week, and unlimited shore diving on the teeming reefs just off the beach.

BOOK IT ► Seven-night packages run from \$750 to \$795 per person, double occupancy. Call (800) 66-UTILA or (318) 893-5024.

—Text and photography by Rob Curran

DIVE OPERATOR PROFILE

V.I. Divers Ltd.

THE BEST OF ST. CROIX

You don't have to leave the country to find great diving. Leave your passport at home and hop a plane for St. Croix, the largest of the beautiful U.S. Virgin Islands. St. Croix's reefs and walls are among the best in the Caribbean and no one knows this remarkable underwater world better than V.I. Divers Ltd., the oldest and most respected dive operator on St. Croix.

While all of St. Croix's dive operators provide access to the island's phenomenal diving, the staff at V.I. Divers sets this operation apart from the rest. It's immediately obvious that this group of professionals love their jobs and the island. Their contagious enthusiasm and abundant knowledge is the core of V.I. Divers' success. In *Rodale's Scuba Diving's* Readers' Choice Awards, V.I.

Divers' staff was rated one of the world's top 10. The shop placed 27th overall and was the only St. Croix operation that made the list.

V.I. Divers' new 32-foot catamaran *Cat Mon Du* is the fastest dive boat on the island, placing all the famed northshore dive sites within a 5 to 25 minute cruise and the west end wrecks only 45 minutes away.

BOOK IT ► V.I. Divers is a full-service PADI 5 Star training center, offering all levels of instruction and certifications. They're located on the waterfront in downtown Christiansted just across the street from the



Hotel Caravelle which means guests who have taken advantage of special packages with this small European-style hotel can walk right out of their rooms and onto the dive boat. The St. Croix Seaport is an excellent new restaurant located at the hotel. Let one of V.I. Divers' friendly staff members help you plan your next dive vacation. Call 800-544-5911, fax 809-773-2859 or e-mail them at vidivers@aol.com.

Coco Island & Okeanos Aggressor

BIG ANIMAL SHANGRI-LA



The Okeanos Aggressor accommodates 21 divers and offers the amenities of a fine hotel and restaurant.

In the 1996 Rodale's Scuba Diving Readers' Choice Awards, divers rated Coco Island number five among dive destinations worldwide. In Indo-Pacific categories, this island ranked number one in best value for diving dollar and number two overall and for most big animals.

No wonder Coco is popular: In spring 1996, passengers on the *Okeanos Aggressor* reported dozens of big animal encounters. Divers witnessed the acrobatic mating rituals of eagle rays. They shared 78-degree waters with Pacific green turtles on nearly every dive. They drifted with schools of mobula rays. Divers went up-close-and-personal with swarms of mating and hunting whitetip sharks at Dos Amigos, Dirty Rock and Manuelita.

Bottlenose dolphins buddied up with divers to escort them to pristine dive sites. One startled guest suddenly found himself the subject of a manta ray's attention; he danced the ocean with his newfound partner for 30 incredible minutes.

Remote Coco Island—located some 375 miles southwest of the Pacific coast of Central America—is one of the crown jewels of Costa Rica's national park sys-

tem. Dense green vegetation and rain forest fringe steep black cliffs split by thundering waterfalls. Transparent waters host a submarine world of coral reefs, sharks, lobsters, manta rays and brilliantly colored fish. Coco is a treasure for naturalists, both topside and under water.

The *Okeanos Aggressor* cruises from mainland Costa Rica for 8 or 10 day dive adventures around Coco Island. This recently refurbished boat is 120 feet of comfort and diving convenience. The live-aboard accommodates 21 passengers in 10 staterooms with private heads and showers. The boat features a fully equipped dining salon, lounge and entertainment center with TV, video and stereo. On the upper level, passengers can catch rays on the forward sun deck or escape to the shade by the wet bar.

The dive deck is a model of convenience. Next to the air fill station, independent lockers with tank racks offer storage for scuba gear.

Photographers appreciate their own amenities: camera table and battery-charging stations within easy reach, E-6 film processing and facilities for editing and viewing slides and video.

BOOK IT ► An 8-day cruise on the *Okeanos Aggressor* is \$2,595 per person, double occupancy; a 10-day cruise, \$2895. The package includes meals and five or seven days of diving with four dives a day. Taca, Lacsca, American, Continental and United airlines serve San Jose, Costa Rica, from North America. For information or reservations, contact your dive travel specialist. Or phone Aggressor Fleet—a full-service travel agency—for direct reservations, air connections and add-on land tour options. Phone (800) 348-2628 or (504) 385-2628. World Wide Web: <http://www.aggressor.com>. E-mail: divboat@aol.com or 103261.1275@compuserve.com. Contact the fleet office for videos of Aggressor's 10 live-aboards and destinations.

—Text by Rob Curran



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That's right! We're giving our valued readers a chance to win fantastic prizes and, at the same time, give a holiday gift of Rodale's SCUBA DIVING to a friend or relative.

Just fill out and mail in one of the attached Grand Prize Entry Certificates.

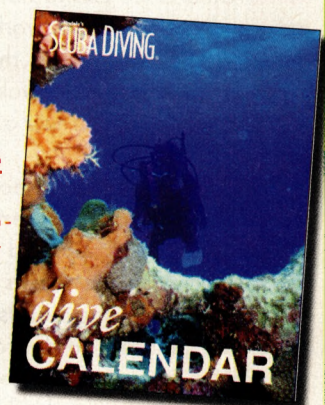
You may be the lucky winner of the \$250,000.00 cash annuity or some other terrific prize! No purchase is necessary to win.

HERE'S HOW YOU MAY WIN AN EXTRA \$50,000.00—\$300,000.00 IN ALL!

Find the five stars on one of the attached Entry Certificates and draw a circle around the middle one. That's all there is to it! And think of all the wonderful things you could do with all that money!

Free Bonus Gift!

A FREE copy of Rodale's SCUBA DIVING 1997 Dive Calendar will automatically be sent to you and a special friend with your gift subscription.



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Mail your \$250,000.00 Grand Prize Entry Certificate right away...

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- * State-of-the-art JVC audio/video system—valued at \$5,000.00.
- * AND MORE! Over 4,500 prizes in all—GUARANTEED to be given away!



If Entry Certificate cards are missing, send your sweepstakes entry and/or gift subscription instructions to Rodale's SCUBA DIVING, P.O. Box 7578, Red Oak, IA 51591-0578. New gift subscriptions are only \$13.97 in the U.S., CDN \$19.97 (including 7% GST) in Canada. See attached card for sweepstakes rules. Void where prohibited.

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Don't wait—return your Grand Prize Entry Certificate today!

FREE DIVE INFO

Simply tear out the reply card, circle the numbers preceding the names of the companies which interest you, fill out your name and address, affix postage, and drop it in the mailbox. You'll soon be receiving information which will help make your diving more enjoyable!

DIVE DESTINATIONS

ARUBA

1. AIR ARUBA 1-800-677-7888 See ad pg. 23
2. ARUBA TOURISM 1-800-TO-ARUBA See ad pg. 23
3. PELICAN WATERSPORTS 011-2978-24739 See ad pg. 23
4. RED SAIL SPORTS/ARUBA 1-800-255-6425 See ad pg. 23
5. SCUBA ARUBA 011-2978-34142 See ad pg. 23
6. UNIQUE SPORTS OF ARUBA 011-2978-60096 See ad pg. 23

AUSTRALIA

7. DIVE DISCOVERY/REEF EXPLORER 1-800-886-7321 See ad pg. 101

BAHAMAS

8. BAHAMAS MINISTRY OF TOURISM 1-800-866-DIVE See ad pg. 04
9. DIVE ABACO 1-800-247-5338 See ad pg. 74
10. GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND TOURISM/UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483) See ad pg. 15
11. LUCAYAN BEACH/UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483) See ad pg. 59
12. SMALL HOPE BAY LODGE 1-800-223-6961 See ad pg. 13
13. STELLA MARIS 1-800-426-0466 See ad pg. 13
14. STUART COVE'S DIVE SOUTH OCEAN 1-800-646-3333 See ad pg. 61
15. SUNSKIFF 1-800-331-5884 See ad pg. 101
16. UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483) See ad pg. 06
17. WALKER'S CAY 1-800-513-5257 See ad pg. 28

BAY ISLANDS/HONDURAS

18. ANTHONY'S KEY RESORT 1-800-227-3483 See ad pg. 28
19. BAYMAN BAY CLUB 1-800-524-1823 See ad pg. 13
20. FANTASY ISLAND BEACH RESORT 1-800-676-2826 See ad pg. 59
21. LAGUNA BEACH RESORT 1-800-668-8452 See ad pg. 74
22. ROATAN CHARTER, INC. 1-800-282-8932 See ad pg. 26

BELIZE

23. BOTTOM TIME DIVE SHOP/BZ TRAVEL SERVICES 1-800-382-7776 See ad pg. 100

BERMUDA

24. BERMUDA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM 1-800-821-1199 See ad pg. 27
25. BLUE WATER DIVERS 1-441-234-1034 See ad pg. 27
26. FANTASEA DIVING 1-441-236-6339 See ad pg. 27
27. SOUTHSIDE SCUBA 1-441-238-1833 See ad pg. 27

BONAIRE

28. DIVI RESORTS 1-800-367-3484 See ad pg. 15
29. SAND DOLLAR CONDOMINIUM RESORT 1-800-288-4773 See ad pg. 25

CAYMAN ISLANDS

30. TREASURE ISLAND DIVERS 1-800-872-7552 See ad pg. 24

FIJI

31. AQUA TREK DIVE TRAVEL SERVICE* 1-800-541-4334 See ad pg. 18W

FLORIDA KEYS

32. AQUA NUTS/KELLY'S ON THE BAY 1-800-226-0415 See ad pg. 101
33. DISCOVERY DIVE 1-305-453-9630 See ad pg. 100
34. KEY WEST DIVERS 1-305-294-7177 See ad pg. 101
35. TAVERNIER DIVE CENTER* 1-800-787-9797 See ad pg. 18S

HAWAII

36. HAWAIIAN DIVERS 1-800-525-PADI See ad pg. 101

MEXICO

37. CEDAM DIVE CENTERS 011-52-987-35129 See ad pg. 13

MIDWEST

38. BONNE TERRE MINE 1-314-731-5003 See ad pg. 101

NORTHEAST

39. DUTCH SPRINGS* 1-610-759-2270 See ad pg. 18NE

PACIFIC

40. CONTINENTAL MICRONESIA 1-800-900-7657 See ad pg. 42
41. DIVE DISCOVERY/ADVENTURE SPORTS GIZO 1-800-886-7321 See ad pg. 101
42. DIVE DISCOVERY/BILIKIKI CRUISES LTD 1-800-886-7321 See ad pg. 101
43. FISH 'N FINS 011-680-488-2637 See ad pg. 41
44. MANTA RAY BAY HOTEL & YAP DIVERS 011-691-350-2300 & 1-800-DIVE YAP See ad pg. 43
45. NATURE'S WAY 011-691-350-2542 See ad pg. 43
46. PACTOURS 1-800-245-4129 See ad pg. 45
47. PALAU DIVING CENTER/CARP ISLAND RESORT 011-680-488-2978 See ad pg. 41
48. PALAU PACIFIC RESORT 011-680-488-2600 See ad pg. 42
49. PALAU VISITORS AUTHORITY 011-680-488-2793 See ad pg. 41
50. POSEIDON VENTURES 1-800-854-9334 See ad pg. 41
51. SAM'S DIVE TOURS 1-800-886-7321 See ad pg. 42
52. SEAWARD HOLIDAYS/S.S. THORFINN 011-691-330-4302 See ad pg. 44
53. SPLASH 1-800-247-3483 See ad pg. 101
54. SUNDANCE TOURS & DIVE SHOP 1-800-325-5000 See ad pg. 44
55. THE CAROLINES RESORT 011-680-488-3754 See ad pg. 41
56. THE VILLAGE 011-691-320-2797 See ad pg. 44
57. TRIP-N-TOUR MICRONESIA 1-800-348-0842 See ad pg. 42
58. TRUK CONTINENTAL HOTEL 011-691-330-2727 See ad pg. 44
59. TRUK STOP HOTEL 011-691-330-4232 See ad pg. 44
60. YAP STATE TOURISM OFFICE 011-691-350-2298 See ad pg. 43

VENEZUELA

61. DIVE TOURS/AEROTUY/OCTOPUS 1-800-433-0885 See ad pg. 74

DIVE EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

62. D.A.N. 1-800-446-2671 See ad pg. 20
63. FLORIDA DIVING INSTITUTE 1-800-282-3328 See ad pg. 100
64. OCEAN CORPORATION 1-800-321-0298 See ad pg. 60
65. PDIC INTERNATIONAL 1-717-342-1276 See ad pg. 81

DIVE EQUIPMENT

66. IDEATIONS DESIGN, INC. 1-800-275-4332 See ad pg. 101
67. OCEAN MASTER* 1-818-582-8000 See ad pg. 18MW
68. ORCATRON COMMUNICATIONS LTD. 1-360-332-1645 See ad pg. C4

DIVE TRAVEL SPECIALIST

69. BAHIA TOURS 1-800-443-0717 See ad pg. 101
70. BLUE LAGOON ADVENTURES INC. 1-800-216-2997 See ad pg. 100
71. DUET TRAVEL 1-800-990-3839 See ad pg. 72
73. REEF & RAINFOREST WORLDWIDE ADVENTURES TRAVEL 1-800-794-9RNR See ad pg. 100
74. TROPICAL ADVENTURES TRAVEL 1-800-247-3483 See ad pg. 99

PHOTOGRAPHY

75. BERGER BROS. CAMERA & VIDEO 1-800-262-4160 See ad pg. 79
76. IKELITE 1-317-923-4523 See ad pg. 78
77. PIONEER RESEARCH 1-800-257-7742 See ad pg. 81
78. SEA & SEA UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY 1-800-SEA-7977 See ad pg. 77
79. UNDERWATER PHOTO TEC 1-603-432-1997 See ad pg. 100

SPECIAL SECTION COZUMEL

80. BLUE BUBBLE DIVERS 1-800-878-8853 See ad pg. 92
81. DIVE HOUSE 1-800-346-6116 See ad pg. 90
82. DIVE PARADISE 1-800-308-5125 See ad pg. 89
83. DIVE TOURS 1-800-433-0885 See ad pg. 86
84. DIVE TOURS/DIVE PALANCAR/DIAMOND RESORT 1-800-433-0885 See ad pg. 91
85. FIESTA AMERICANA COZUMEL REEF HOTEL 1-800-346-6116 See ad pg. 90
86. GRAND CLUB, INC. 1-800-504-0552 See ad pg. 92
87. HOTEL BARRACUDA 011-52-987-20002 See ad pg. 92
88. ISLAND DREAMS TRAVEL 1-800-346-6116 See ad pg. 90
89. MELIA MAYAN PARADISUS 1-800-336-3542 See ad pg. 87
90. PLAZA LAS GLORIAS 1-800-433-0885 See ad pg. 86
91. POSEIDON VENTURES 1-800-854-9334 See ad pg. 90
92. REEF & RAINFOREST WORLDWIDE ADVENTURES TRAVEL 1-800-794-9RNR See ad pg. 90
93. SCUBA DU 011-52-987-23397 See ad pg. 91
94. TROPICAL TOURS INC. 1-800-711-4700 See ad pg. 88

SPECIAL SECTION LIVE-ABOARDS

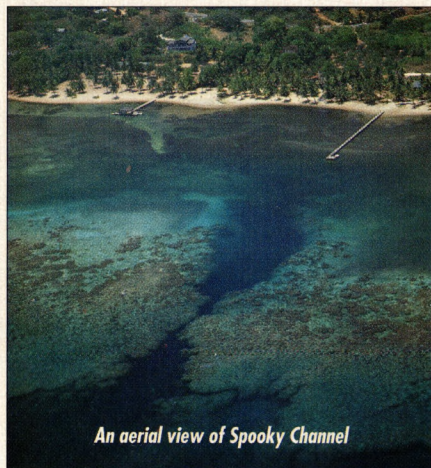
95. AGGRESSOR FLEET 1-800-348-2628 See ad pg. 67
96. BOTTOM TIME ADVENTURES 1-800-234-8464/954-921-7798 See ad pg. 73
97. EXPLORER VENTURES LTD 1-800-322-3577 See ad pg. 72
98. NEKTON DIVING CRUISES 1-800-899-6753 EXT. ROD See ad pg. 69
99. OCEAN WIDE EXPEDITION/REMBRANDT 1-800-453-7245 (SAIL) See ad pg. 73
100. PETER HUGHES 1-800-932-6237 See ad pg. 65
101. SPORT TOURS 1-800-660-2754 See ad pg. 68
102. TROPICAL ADVENTURES TRAVEL 1-800-247-3483 See ad pg. 70
103. WINDJAMMER BAREFOOT CRUISES 1-800-327-2601 See ad pg. 71

SUBJECT TO CHANGE
*REGIONAL ADS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE ONLY
(MIDWEST - MW, SOUTH - S, WEST - W)

Bay Islands Beach Resort

PRIVATE DIVE RESORT DISCOVERED OFF FAMOUS SPOOKY CHANNEL!

At the Bay Islands Beach Resort on Roatan, Ted and Cam O'Brien have created the perfect balance between a highly professional full-service dive operation and a laid-back, intimate



An aerial view of Spooky Channel

bed-and-breakfast style dive resort. With only 24-38 guests each week, it is easy for them to adjust schedules, meals, and activities to their guests' desires. The resort's highly successful "Rent The Entire Resort" plan allows dive clubs and shops, alumni associations and businesses exclusive use of the resort's facilities and staff.

Bay Islands Beach Resort is 44 acres of panoramic waterfront and hillside within the Marine Reserve. A two-story Spanish-style plantation house and beach villas sit among beautiful landscaped property with fruit and nut trees, flowers and towering coconut palms. Just off the beach is the famous Spooky Channel, one of the best shore (and boat) dives on the island. Swim through the eerie crack in the reef to the breathtaking wall. Or snorkel along the pristine reef and view the spectacular

display of fishes and corals.

Eight-day packages include seven nights' air-conditioned accommodations, 16 boat dives (two tanks in the morning, one in the afternoon, one night dive), unlimited shore dives and three delicious meals a day. Festivities featured are the Tabiyaya Beach picnic trip, Land Crab safari, the traditional lobster buffet and Limbo and Punta party with music and dancing on the beach.

BOOK IT ► Group leaders call for "Rent the Entire Resort" details. An individual seven-night dive package is \$725; non-divers, \$650 pp/do. Call your local dive shop or Bay Islands Beach Resort toll-free (800) 4 ROATAN or (561) 624-5774, fax (561) 624-7751.

—Text by Rob Curran

DIVE OPERATOR PROFILE

Anchor Dive Center

GATEWAY TO ST. CROIX'S SEVEN WONDERS AND MORE

Why waste precious time traveling to dive sites when you can start at the heart of St. Croix's best diving? Conveniently located in the Salt River National Park, Anchor Dive Center is strategically situated just minutes away from the notoriously gorgeous north shore walls—including Salt River West Wall and Cane Bay Wall, which are considered among the healthiest and most prolific in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Anchor Dive Center is the only dive operation located in the national park. Their boats can access all the best sites within five minutes, even in rough weather when other dive boats can't make it out of the harbor. This easy access makes it possible for Anchor Dive Center to offer guests virtually unlimited diving, including night dives and pre-dawn dives, a convenience

usually found only on live-aboards. Another plus is that Anchor Dive runs small boats, providing more personalized service. Since the boats are never more than a few minutes away, they return to the shop between dives, so divers can rest or explore. Guests are encouraged to sign up for one of the scheduled hikes through the Park.

There are more than three sites in Anchor Dive Center's underwater repertoire, and most are suitable for all experience levels. On the top of the hit parade are what the Anchor Dive staff calls the "Seven Wonders," an impressive line-up representing the best diving St. Croix has to offer. Over the years, the Anchor Dive staff has uncovered several secret spots not visited by other dive shops. And they offer a handful of challenging dives sure to thrill even the most advanced diver.



BOOK IT ► Anchor Dive Center offers great package deals with Mill Harbour Condominiums and several other fine hotels on the island. Call Anchor Dive Center today and get to know the staff. They're a friendly bunch who love telling "whale tales," and sharing the wonders of their very special island. Call (800) 532-DIVE or fax (809) 778-1522.

DIVE MEDICINE

(Continued from page 84)

traindications to diving with a prosthetic valve. However, there is the possibility that the turbulent blood flow across the replaced valve may promote bubble formation on ascent—putting you at risk for a small stroke if these bubbles travel to your brain.

Of greater concern in your case is the fact that you're on Coumadin, a blood thinner. I assume that prior to your surgery, your surgeon discussed the pros and cons of the two main types of replacement valves, artificial and porcine. Given your age, an artificial prosthetic valve is clearly the best

Risk Factors To Learn by Heart

Hearth disease, specifically coronary artery disease (CAD), is the leading cause of death in the western hemisphere, resulting in nearly a million deaths a year in the United States alone. A review of DAN's latest report on diving fatalities shows that fully 25 percent of the deaths discussed cited heart disease as the primary factor or a significant contributing factor.

The importance of preventing, recognizing and treating cardiovascular diseases in scuba divers cannot be stressed enough. The fact that divers function in an underwater environment, and frequently in remote places far removed from advanced medical care, dramatically reduces the chances of survival should something happen. Prevention is our best weapon.

While many heart attacks are totally unexpected, there are risk factors that increase the likelihood of CAD and subsequent problems. These are:

- ▶ high cholesterol
- ▶ smoking
- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ obesity
- ▶ age (over 45 for men, 55 for women)
- ▶ diabetes

Anyone who meets the age criteria or who has two or more of the other risk factors should have a complete physical evaluation, including an exercise stress test, prior to beginning or continuing diving.

choice, as porcine valves need to be replaced every seven to 10 years, but it means you must take Coumadin.

The problem with diving on Coumadin stems from the potentially serious bleeds that can occur from ear or sinus squeeze or any other barotrauma. A ruptured small blood vessel can result in a significant hemorrhage.

Because of this, I must advise against your diving again. I realize that this is terrible news, but the potential risks to your health far outweigh the benefits. ☺

Questions for Dr. Shelanski should be addressed to RSD, Dive Medicine, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405; e-mail RSDmgzn@aol.com.

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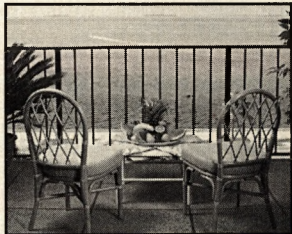
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Galapagos

(Continued from page 50)

only be seen as a move away from international support and protection for the fragile World Heritage Site.

Johanna Barry predicts that Veliz will be re-elected. The political power of the Galapagos is firmly in the hands of the fishermen.

The Starving Dog

One need only wander the streets of downtown Quito a few hours (as most visitors to the Galapagos do), and see the Indian children hardened into beggary before they can walk to grasp how the Galapagos have begun to slip away. "A dog starv'd at his Master's Gate / Predicts the ruin of the State," wrote William Blake. So much the worse for starving children. Ecuador, a third-world country strapped for cash, has predictably begun to sell off its natural resources. Debt from the recent border war with Peru, plus the fall in the value of its currency, have weakened Ecuador's resolve to protect Galapagos. Under these pressures, exacerbated by Ecuador's aggressive and opportunistic fisheries officials, the lucrative Asian fishery markets have proved irresistible.

More difficult to understand is how the international community has sat idly on the sidelines while the Galapagos changes from a place to watch evolution unfold, to a place to witness the devolution of man. Since the establishment of the Galapagos National Park by Ecuador in 1959, scientists and technical experts from around the world have assisted in the shaping and preserving of the Galapagos. The recognition of the islands in 1971 as a World Heritage Site and as a UNESCO Man in the Biosphere Reserve in 1984 are further intended to foster international cooperation in preservation, but are effective mainly if the sites are designated "endangered."

Ecuador recently had the opportunity to avail the Galapagos of U.N. assistance—and thus interference—but campaigned forcefully against endangered status, and performed showcase seizures of sea cucumbers to show its willingness to police the Marine Reserve.

Jack Grove argues that the international community has been kept in the dark concerning the crisis in the marine environment by tourist operators who could sound the alarm but have kept silent for fear of short-term losses. Ecuador's tourism income dropped from \$250 million in 1994 to \$188 million in 1995 fol-

lowing the Galapagos Islands pepineros strike and Veliz's threat to take tourist hostages. Operators are understandably reluctant to jeopardize bookings further by publicizing the decline of the marine environment, and there are few other witnesses to the underwater depredations.

Hugo Arnal, Ecuador Country Program Director of the Nature Conservancy, points out that there are many native Galapaguenos who want to help protect the islands. Residents, hotel owners, boat operators and gift shop owners have formed a Committee for Peace and Goodwill which is protesting the illegal fisheries, and the U.S. Agency for International Development has begun to work with locals to develop alternatives to fishing. Experts agree that the cooperation, if not leadership, of the 16,000 Galapaguenos is vital to any solution. Conservationists have published comprehensive, intelligent plans to coordinate local, small-scale fishing with the tourist industry market, but little change can come without the political will of the Ecuadorian government.

Saving the marine life of the Galapagos will be a decisive test of humanity's ability to preserve the beauty—indeed, the integrity—of the planet. The feeling on the part of conservationists is that if we fail here, we won't save any of the world's endangered places—not the wetlands, not the rain forest. They will all fall to the greed and ineptitude of a shortsighted and voracious species many billion strong.

Few places on earth are so universally revered as the Galapagos Islands. Few places are so immediately arresting in natural beauty, living drama and mysterious innocence. The great paradigm shift that occurred on these black lava stones forged powerful links between all creatures, and toppled every pillar of human superiority except the ability to shape our own evolution. If we destroy the birthplace of the theory of evolution, we lose not just the living shrine and symbol, but also the last best good news of the modern era: the possibility of collective wisdom—and action.

I recently learned that Galapagos National Park, having scraped up funds for gasoline, relaunched the *Guadalupe River*, the U.S.-donated patrol boat, to enforce the ambiguous laws of the Marine Reserve. It was carrying 25,000 rounds of ammunition.

May brains prevail over bullets. ☺

Additional reporting by field editor Lance Leonhardt.

FAR HORIZON

An RSD Contest

Where in the dive world are you?



You're on a machine that was built to traverse water, was powered by water and ultimately destroyed by it in a place the tourist brochures call the watersports capital of the world. No wonder more than 100 divers visit this site daily.

Other explorers made this area a crossroads as well, including Sebastian Cabot, Ponce de Leon, Francis Drake and Christopher Columbus, who called it "Las Once Mil Virgenes." Pirates loved its rugged geography, which created hideaways for their renegade craft. Moviemakers, as well as horse-eye jacks, grunts, snapper and orange cup corals, like this wreck, too.

It lies 4,000 miles from where it was built, and from where these islands have been governed for more than three centuries. A beauty of her day, 310 feet long with a 40-foot beam, she displaced 2,738 gross tons and could reach a top speed of 14 knots.

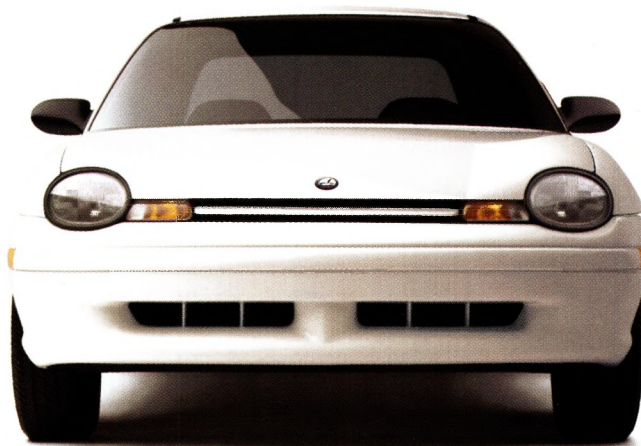
But all turned bleak as the barometer fell and skies turned dark the morning of Oct. 29, 1867. Sensing danger, her captain headed out of anchorage at full speed to give the ship some sailing space. Hurricane winds slapped her hard, and after a short lull, slapped her again and sent her onto the rocks. She flipped over, snapped in two and sank to the seafloor. Besides one passenger and a handful of crew, no one was ever seen again. Today, she rests at five to 13 fathoms below the waves, and was declared a national park in 1980.

To enter, identify this site by island group and shipwreck. Write your answers on a postcard with your name, address and telephone number, and send it to us at: "Where in the Dive World Contest," RSD, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405. Correct answers will be entered in a grand prize drawing to be held in December 1996. The winner will receive a dive vacation for two to one of the destinations featured in the contest.

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Yo!



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